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# BLACK ORPHEUS

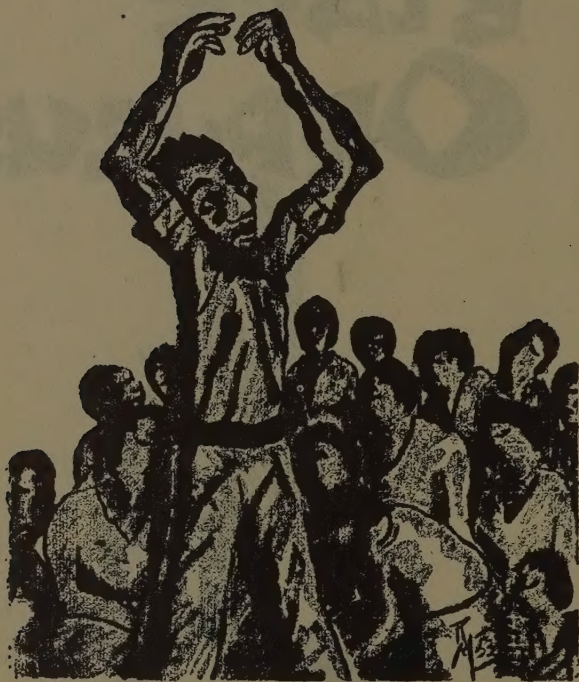


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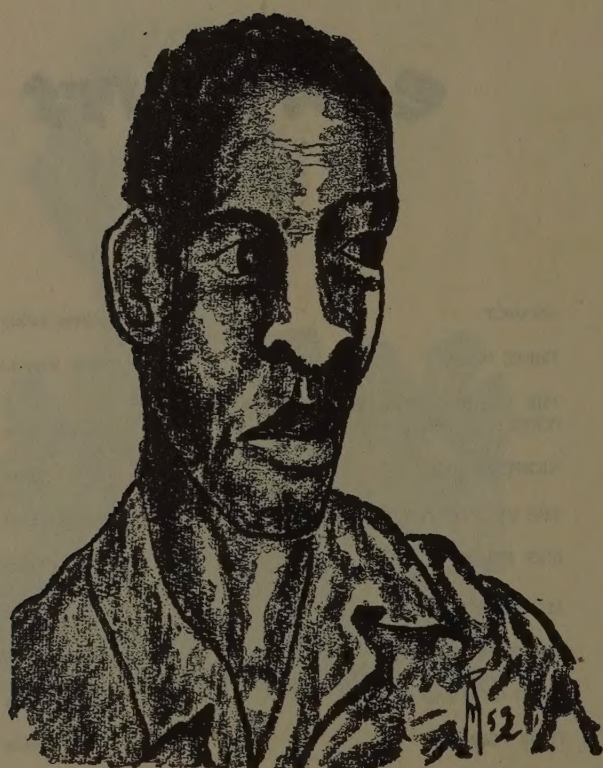
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# ANANCY

BY ANDREW SALKEY

I'm going to tell you a story about a spider. The spider's name is Anancy. The story is such a wonder story that not even Anancy himself would want to tell it. And that's the mystery of things; believe me.

Well, now, Anancy was a real big spider — the kind of spider with heaps of shoulder muscles, a black hairy-hairy chest and a night black frighten children beard on his chin. Anancy was really a frightened-up spectacle of all things powerful and massive. He was a miracle of terror. All the same though, he had a certain sort of high class dignity together with all the strong presence that most spiders carry around with them. And this high class dignity, this sort of big house pride, was also a form of strength. It was a strength in the way that veins and muscles in the arm are sure signs of stress, strain and strength.

When Anancy walked about the place, he looked like a sort of a war memorial rumbling and tumbling at earthquake time. Anancy was the kind of spider who could do plenty of things; like swim-in-river, climb tall-tall mountains and run long-long races. Anancy was also a great time trickster and a giant-wrestler, as well. Total everybody called his name and still calling it in a hush-hush voice: "Who, Anancy? Man, Anancy is a giant wrestler! Anancy is a fairground of powers and muscles! Anancy is a spider is a champion is a strangler is a basinful of big house pride is a real terror is a ocean of magic with him hands and feet!"

Now, one day some fat news reached Anancy and the news said that the ghosts from the far far country parts were thinking of holding a real serious wrestling match; and because Anancy is all that he is, he decided sudden-like that he would go to the far far country parts and take part in the match with the ghosts.

Well, when total everybody in Anancy's village heard what Anancy was going to do, some of his wrestler friends felt doubtful and tormented-up, some of his political spider friends started to put bets on him, some decided that they would pray plenty for Anancy; and some just stood shaking their head of worries and sighing heaps of sympathetic sighs.

But Anancy had a mother and a father. And he loved them in a great respectful way. But they didn't like the wrestling-match idea, at all, at all. Anancy's mother started to tell Anancy that it is a foolish business for him to wrestle against ghosts because ghosts can read a spider's mind and they can see clear-like total everything that a spider's going to do before he actually does it.

All that Anancy said to that was; "One ghost is a hundred ghosts, and a hundred ghosts is only one ghost. A ghost is only a ghost to me."

But Anancy's mother and father were arguing with plenty love in their hearts for him. They kept reminding him of the days when he couldn't even see straight; of the days when the shadow of a hoe at the slant used to frighten him; of the days when the smallest noise used to make him draw up all his spider legs under himself and shudder. They tried hard to talk protection into him but all he said was: "I'm Anancy."



When his mother and father were pleading, all he was doing was stretching out his arms and yawning a wide tired yawn, and going on like he was bored and frightened about total nothing in the world.

Later on that same day, he went back to his mother and because she was so sad, Anancy whispered some nice-nice words in her ears, and the nice-nice words made her sad face light up with twinkle eyes and merry-merry heart. Then he gave her some corn meal and cassava flour and asked her to make some cassava cakes for him. He rubbed his arms with sweet herbs and he tensed up his muscles. Afterwards, he stepped outside and gave away some juicy mangoes and nuts to the children spiders who were always standing round his hut. He shut his hut door and rested himself for a while. Then he went up to his mother and asked her for the cassava cakes. She was looking pale and mournful as if she saw a funeral standing up in front of her instead of her own son. She cleared her throat and told him that the cassava cakes were not ready. **Anancy wrinkled up his eyes and was angry bad-bad.** He was puffing and blowing inside himself like a heap of brand-new bellows.

Well, Anancy didn't wait to hear what his mother was going to explain to him; he just ups and left her and ran down the road to meet his best friend, Brother Tacuma, who always travelled with him wherever he went. Brother Tacuma was a calm sea, thoughtful sort of spider, constantly walking by Anancy's side and constantly smiling through dark thinking eyes. (This was so much Brother Tacuma's way of behaving that he got the name of 'conscience of all spiders'.)

So now, Anancy and Brother Tacuma started to walk to the far far country parts where the ghosts were waiting to open the wrestling match. So they were walking in all sorts of darkness in the forest; and different bad sounds and bird noises were making some terrible confusion in both their heads. Trees and leaves and twigs and branches were having some faces of evilness and dead skull laughter. There was no brightness in the forest at all. Big lizards and scorpions and cobra-snakes were all over the place; and they were looking ugly and hungry like forty days in the wilderness.

When Brother Tacuma and Anancy got out of the forest they were so tired and full of sleepy eyes and tight muscles that total everything seemed to look like one big blur of confusion and hurricane happenings. Still and all though, now that Anancy actually reached the far far country of the ghosts, he ran into some good luck. He heard of a new rule that the ghosts had just passed. And this was it: "When anybody comes to wrestle with a ghost and the ghost beats up that person, the custom is for the conquering ghost to carry that person away and to dash that person's head against a sharp rockstone which is a special river rockstone fixed up for the purpose."

Now neither Anancy nor Brother Tacuma liked the new rule at all. Stomach turned over flip flap when they saw what the ghosts were doing to the persons whom they were conquering. After watching those horrible happenings, up comes a small-small ghost to talk to Anancy and Brother Tacuma. Listen to how he's talking to them in a nose voice: "So you two small time wrestlers come to the match. I recognise you, Anancy. You still among the living, eh. We'll have to see about that."

To that speech Anancy just bowed his head and started to stretch his muscles. That was how Anancy answered the small-small ghost. But the small-small ghost wasn't satisfied. Hear him: "Anancy! You think that pride is a good thing to have, eh. You think that pride is a good mirror for you to see yourself in properly? Up and down this country we break all such mirrors."

After a little foot shifting, clearing of throats, hustling here and there, things



really began to look like business. Anancy started to fight, now. Even though it was broad daylight the silence that was surrounding everything and everybody was like the silence of a Sunday morning. The first ghost contestant was a tall-tall ghost with hands and feet like an old time electric fan, actually going on mad and circular like an old time electric fan. The first ghost was tough like crocodile skin and stiff like ice; and because he was stiff like ice, he was also slippery out of this world. But Anancy moved up and down like he was a great Jack-in-the box in a trance. He dived into the ghost, twisted him up and twisted him round, and before you could say Jack Mandora, he dropped him like a piece of rolled up silver paper. After that, he grabbed the ghost and dashed him down on the river rockstone. As soon as the ghost touched the rockstone, he was splintered fine like icing sugar; and just as white as that.

Brother Tacuma started to feel a proud feeling for Anancy. He just looked at Anancy and smiled a lovely-brother-smile at him.

Then another ghost came out and challenged Anancy with plenty hot breathing, insults and wild nose talking. This ghost had four heads, a big central head with three other heads sitting on it. Anancy looked at him, cute-like. Anancy moved up and down the wrestling ring and began to spin himself like a bright spinning two-and-six piece. When he was doing that the four headed ghost began to get dizzy and all his eight eyes turned over and became jumbled up like plenty marbles twirling in a circle. After that, Anancy stepped heavy and stepped light and danced round and round until sudden-like the ghost's four heads dropped off. When they touched the ground, they rolled away in four different corners of the ring and the body of the ghost was crumpled up like dry grass.

Well, now, after that pretty victory, another ghost walked into the ring. This ghost had eight heads, and it could think eight times as fast as Anancy. But Anancy was ready, and quick and brisk he was throwing his hands round the ghost's neck. As Anancy did that, the eight heads dropped off and rolled away like marbles. Then Anancy grabbed the next ghost who had ten heads and beat him up as if nothing happened.

He beat up the twelve headed one, the fourteen headed one, the sixteen headed one, the eighteen headed one and the twenty headed one. You won't believe me when I tell you that the heads were rolling all over the place like wild red cabbage, and the eyes were blinking neons turning over and over, showing white, black and red. The whole place was a total of heads and eyes!

By this time, Anancy was really causing the ghosts a lot of worry head. So the ghosts who had promoted the wrestling-match decided to hold a Ghosts United conference. Big meeting of nose accents going on in deep session! After they had talked plenty Summit talking, they found the answer to the Anancy problem. And this was the answer to the problem: Anancy will have one last fight. And this time, Anancy must fight his own spirit. Imagine that, now! Anancy actually fighting Anancy! Yet, that's the mystery of things: believe me. Body against spirit! (Of course, this is one spirit that will have only one head.)

Well, both of them stood up and faced each other — the Anancy's body facing his own spirit. Their eyes made four as they looked at each other. All the total ghosts were holding a long low-breathing silence. Sudden-like, Anancy's spirit looked at Anancy's body, saw right through it and Anancy's body felt all crumpled-up like.

After all the trembling brain and soul messages between body and spirit, Anancy's spirit made a flash of lightning movement and lifted up Anancy's body and dashed it against the rockstone. And Anancy's body was splintered up into small pieces like plenty showers of confetti.

So listen to the ghosts, now; "Ai-ya-ai! At last it's come to pass! At last! Who ever heard of anybody fighting against his own life! Serve him right! Serve him damn right! Proud and stupid spider!"

After that, the chief of the ghosts walked into a thick clump of bush-john, picked some berries off the bush-john tree, and squeezed the juice into the eyes of all the dead ghosts. Quick-like, all of the conquered ghosts jumped up and began to live again and talk in their old time nose voices.

Brother Tacuma who was watching the chief ghost, decided to do total everything he saw the chief ghost do. So Brother Tacuma went into the thick clump of bush-john, picked some berries off it and squeezed the juice into Anancy's right eye, then, into his left eye. As soon as he did that, quick-like, Anancy came back to life and returned to his normal spider self. Yet, even though Anancy was restored to his living body again, he was feeling very angry and he started to grumble and quarrel with his spirit for being a Judas person to him. He told his spirit that he hated the bad treachery which it did to his body. And the row lasted for a long time.

When the ghosts returned to find Anancy and to pick up his pieces and to eat him for supper, they didn't see him, at all. But they heard him far off. They heard him shouting out loud in the distance, quarrelling with his spirit and running away as fast as he could go from the far far country parts. So the ghosts decided to chase Brother Tacuma and Anancy.

The ghosts were running mad races and Anancy and Brother Tacuma were running even faster. The ghosts started catching up, now. The speed is pure power-house speed between them! But Anancy and Brother Tacuma were getting nearer home, now. The ghosts opened out to a bigger speed and the forest was making plenty celebrating noises like hurricane wind.

Anancy and Brother Tacuma turned the last corner and headed for the door that led into Anancy's mother's hut. The ghosts were coming quicker, now. They were flying low like madness and cursing hot fever. Then, Anancy, sudden-like, from nowhere started to feel weak and he felt like all his total courage and power was oozing out of him. As he was having that weak sensation, he gave up the high speeding and he began to slow down. As he was slowing down, quick-like, something burst way deep down inside him. Anancy's spirit, who had been having a big disagreement with Anancy's body, decided to show that he was no Judas person at all. So Anancy's spirit (one time conqueror and only conqueror of Anancy) shot out of Anancy's sweating body and began to tackle the ghosts. Anancy's spirit performed some terrible wrestling tricks on the ghosts. After about the count of twelve, most of the ghosts who were chasing Anancy cried out in plenty aches and pain and they turned round the other way and ran back to the far far country parts; all the same, many of them couldn't move because they were too battered and splintered.

As soon as the ghosts were no more, Anancy's spirit made a real flying come-back to Anancy's body. And as that was happening a joyous, heaven-come-down-to-earth smile spread itself all over Anancy's face. Brother Tacuma saw the joyous, heaven-come-down-to-earth smile on Anancy's face and he, too, felt a happy feeling swelling way deep down inside himself. And Anancy made Brother Tacuma know that a person is truly strong only after that person's spirit has proved him.

# THREE POEMS

BY WOLE SOYINKA

## THE IMMIGRANT

Knowing  
(Though he will deny it)  
That this equation must be sought  
Not in any woman's arms  
But in the cream-laid  
De-Odo-ro-noed limbs  
Of the native girl herself,  
He scans the gaudy bulbs  
(For the fiftieth time)  
Of dancing Hammersmith palace.  
Then, desperately  
(Although his swagger belies it)  
He tries his manhood  
On the triteness of —  
'May I . . . ?'  
And waits upon the languor of  
Her bored appraisal.  
They would have paired each other  
To an even point  
(Even though her stare confounds it)  
Her gown, fashion wise  
But body foolish,  
Beggars his flashy  
Incredible tie.  
Her face exchanges  
Vulgarity  
For his uncouthness.  
And the plumb of their twin minds  
Reads Nil.  
And yet her answer, given negative  
Was barbed with  
(Albeit ill-fitting) contempt.  
Without  
Even the usual palliative  
False-bottom smile,  
Her eyes had said,  
'You? Not at any price'  
He felt the wound grow septic  
(Hard though he tried to close it)  
His fingers twitched  
And toyed with the idea,



The knife that waited on the slight,  
 On the sudden nerve that would join her face  
 To scars identical  
 With what he felt inside.  
 The blade remained  
 In the sweat filled pocket.  
 He ran a gauntlet of milling couples  
 And they all seemed  
 To know  
 To jeer at his defeat.  
 He knew now the fatality  
 Of his black, flattened nose,  
 —Not at any price? —  
 The fingers shift  
 From blood  
 To feel the folded  
 Shrewish savings of his menial post.  
 His little brain seeks  
 Factual negation of her estimate  
 Seeks  
 Quick revenge  
 Lusts for the act  
 Of degradation of her sex and race.  
 Failing to find  
 A difference in the street lamp faces  
 (He had sought the very best)  
 He makes his choice at random  
 Haggles somewhat at the price,  
 Then follows her, to pass  
 The night  
 In reciprocal humiliation.

# ..... AND THE OTHER IMMIGRANT

My dignity is sewn  
 Into the lining of a three-piece suit.  
 Stiff, and with the whiteness which  
 Out-Europes Europe,  
 My crisp Van Heusen collar  
 Cradles an All-Wool Tootal tie,  
 Turning respectful eyes towards  
 I, Me resplendent in my three piece suit.  
 My dignity I rescue  
 From the shop assistant's levity  
 From the raucous laugh  
 Of the unmannered station guard  
 (Who hasn't learnt his place)  
 From the familiarity  
 Of the Cockney taxi man

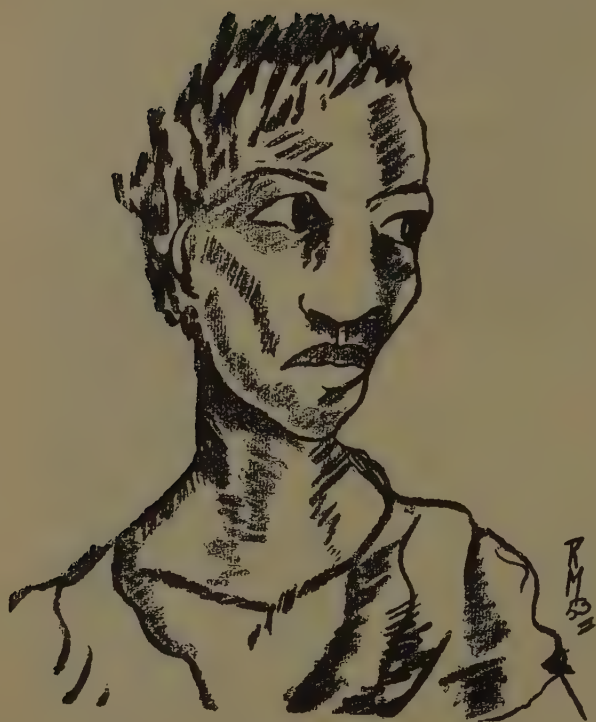
Who thinks I'll bandy jokes with him,  
 A mere  
 Public servant —  
 One and all,  
 They wilt at the touch of ice.  
 My mouth is shaped perpetually  
 Upon the word "riff-raff".  
 The stowaway is a crook  
 The steerage passenger  
 Beneath my notice  
 And nomad is  
 A dirty word.  
 I do not shrink from conflict, but  
 ! think exposure  
 To the merest chance of  
 A slight, an insult or indignity  
 Mere foolishness.  
 My victory is the proof  
 That I can "do without them."  
 I keep among my kind  
 For I condemn  
 All whiteness in a face.  
 My mind would open to  
 The niceties of judgement,  
 To fine distinctions in a thought  
 If such things did exist.  
 But only fools can doubt  
 The Solve-All  
 Philosopher's stone attributes  
 Of Up-Nasser-Freedom-for-Africa  
 The height and end of all  
 So shout with me!  
 Let pedants tease their pompous heads  
 While to my repertoire I add  
 (The sound, if not the spirit of)  
 Our new-coined  
 Intellectuals' slogan —  
 Negritude.  
 Untouched I float  
 Upon the crest of an alien, white society,  
 My weekly dues are met  
 (Upon my fourth, hire purchase  
 Three piece suit)  
 With proud regularity,  
 Ensuring round-the-year entombment  
 Winter or blazing summer,  
 And sacrifices are gladly made  
 (Like two square  
 Semolina meals a day)  
 By thinking of the government house,  
 Senior service car,  
 And hordes of admiring women  
 Awaiting me,  
 Where the one-eyed man is king.

# MY NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOUR

My next door neighbour  
Waits the summons of three rings,  
Falling  
In quick succession.  
Her legs are tuned  
The pattern well rehearsed  
And she minces down the stairs  
With a sure,  
Adjustable smile.  
My next door neighbour  
Times her men  
With music.  
A disc, or two or three  
Vending same apathy  
Of love  
(The lyric's one and every word)  
And an extra charge for the extra disc  
Falling  
In quick succession.  
The woman upstairs  
(Five children and a wreck)  
Is grateful for  
My next door neighbour.  
For now it is  
All in the family (so to speak)  
And hubby no longer  
Stays out the night  
Or spends good cash on taxi fares  
And — call it woman's logic —  
There is less risk that he might catch  
Something  
From the girl downstairs  
Than from a total stranger.  
And there's a discount in home trade.  
And tempers are less frayed  
When he has  
Travelled down that flight of stairs  
And up again.  
In fact,  
My next door neighbour  
Is a domestic valve  
A sound economy.  
The lizard in the basement flat  
Has built her life around  
A window pane.  
Like the dog in the experiment  
She has learnt to salivate  
Upon the sounding of three gongs  
In quick succession.  
Her poky eyebeads squint  
Malevolence.



Her arid tongue is lolled  
In moral curses.  
Day and night  
Second begrudged  
That must be spent away  
From her indignat throne, she  
Hates  
My next door neighbour.  
The lizard only does not know  
How, lacking further aim  
She'd shrivel on the bare  
Square patch of venery  
'And die of emptiness  
If, for some cause  
Some day,  
The threesome failed to fall  
In quick succession.  
I live in a contented house  
And my next door neighbour  
Slithers down the bannister  
And fetches in the next  
In the longing line of men  
Falling,  
In quick succession.



# L. S. SENGHOR

## THE THEME OF THE ANCESTORS IN SENGHOR'S POETRY

BY ULLI BEIER

Those African poets who most strongly assert their "négritude", are often the most sophisticated and — on the surface at least — the most assimilated Africans. One might ask oneself therefore, whether this new proclamation of "négritude" is a genuine rediscovery of African attitudes and values in the poet's soul, or whether it is merely a deliberate, selfconscious intention, a kind of cultural manifesto. Since "négritude" has become a kind of literary and cultural movement some people will no doubt suspect that if Senghor makes use of Balafongs and Khalams in his poetry when he speaks of the princess of Elissa and the night of Maghreb, when he envisages the Lamantines drinking at the source and the procession of the dead on the beach — that all these are merely picturesque trappings intended to provide atmosphere and an African flavour to his poetry.

In the following I shall attempt to show that this is not so. Senghor's poetry is not artificially folkloristic, it is genuinely African, because it expresses genuinely African attitudes on very basic questions. One could no doubt analyse the reactions of the poet to love, politics and a great many other subjects and examine to what extent the outlook is specifically African. Here I shall confine myself to examine Senghor's treatment of the ancestors and the dead in his poems.

The African attitude to death is fundamentally different from the European one. The European has almost lost his belief in survival after death altogether. But even where it still exists the separation between the living and the dead is believed to be final. The dead never return to this earth and they do not continue to influence the living community from beyond. As if to symbolize the finality of this separation we bury our dead outside the town in secluded and walled in places. Even in the middle ages, when belief in eternal life was strongest, the popular image of death was one of horror, as many revolting images in mediaeval churches show.

In Africa on the other hand the idea of death is not associated with horror. The living and the dead are in continuous contact and a large part of the religious life of the African is devoted to establishing a harmonious contact with the dead. The ancestors are the guardians of morality among the living community, they are guides and protectors. Through priests and maskers a constant communication is maintained with the dead. Nor is their state final. An ancestor can be reborn in the same family and many African names denoting "father has come back" or "mother has returned" testify to this belief. It is significant that in Africa the important people are buried in the compound or even inside a room. It is a common sight in Africa to see children play around the tomb of their grandfather — something quite unthinkable in Europe.

When we look at Senghor's poetry the first thing that strikes us is the important part played by the dead. In European poetry too, there may be poems about death, but Senghor's poems are not really about death. Senghor writes about life and love, but whatever he does, the dead are near and he is conscious of their presence.

Life and death are not separate spheres to him, but they flow into each other, they have no clear boundaries. A poem in his latest volume "Ethiopi-ques" begins:

I do not know when it happened, I always confuse childhood  
and Eden,

And I mix up death and life — who are joined by a tender bridge.

These lines also contain another very African idea: the closeness of the child to the ancestors. The very small child is often treated with great reverence in Africa, because it has only just come from the other sphere, where it was in contact with the revered ancestors, where in a sense, it was an ancestor. Therefore a little bit of the awe reserved to the ancestors attaches to it. So conscious is the African of this perpetual cycle of life and death that in Benin a very old man is addressed as "my child".

It is because of this belief in the great cycle of birth, death and rebirth that the idea of death holds no horror. Death is *familiar*, because everyone has moments of vague memories of the country from which he has come:

"In the evening I dream of the lost land where the dead and kings  
were my relatives."

The familiar dead are friends rather than horrors, more often than not they appear as an image of peace and gentleness:

"Because their smile is gentle like the smile of our dead who dance  
in the blue villages of the Fata Morgana".

The dead are always present, there is no separation, no "death" in the European sense:

"O you dead, who have always refused to die, who have always  
resisted death."

There is an exquisite little poem entitled "Visit" in which Senghor describes the mystic hour in which communion with the dead, with "his" dead is established. We can quote it here in full:

"I dream in the intimate semidarkness of an afternoon.

I am visited by the fatigues of the day,

The deceased of the year, the souvenirs of the decade,

Like the procession of the dead in the village on the horizon of the  
shallow sea.

It is the same sun bedewed with illusions,

The same sky unnerved by hidden presences,

The same sky feared by those who have a reckoning with the dead.

And suddenly my dead draw near to me....."

But there is much more to Senghor than this feeling of presence and communion. Without any selfconsciousness at all the poet addresses himself to the dead, to the ancestors and invokes their help. His famous poem "Prayer to Masks" (see "Black Orpheus" No. 1) begins with an invocation of the masks, symbol of the ancestors:

"Masks, Oh Masks!

Black mask, red mask, your black and white masks,  
Rectangular masks through whom the spirit breathes,

I greet you in silence!

And you too my pantherheaded ancestor."

And he demands their help in this hour when the new African is to be born: "Now turn your immobile eyes towards your children". And again in the poem "In Memoriam" he calls on the dead to protect and guide his life:



"Protect from the Sine to the Seine, and in the fragile veins my  
 inextinguishable blood,  
 Protect my dreams, like your sons, the longlegged migratory birds.  
 O you dead, protect the roofs of Paris in the Sunday fog, the roofs  
 protecting my dead,  
 And forbid me to descend from my dangerously safe tower,  
 To my brothers with blue eyes  
 And hard hands."

But the dead are not only protectors and guides. It from them that we learn the true secret of life. It is only through mystic unification with the dead that we can understand life in its depth and live it with intensity. Thus Senghor concludes his poem "Night of Sin":

"Let me listen in the smoky hut for the shadowy visit of propitious  
 souls,  
 My head on your breast glows, like a kuskus ball smoking out of  
 the fire.  
 Let me breathe the smell of our dead, let me contemplate and repeat  
 their living voice, let me learn  
 To live before I sink, deeper than the diver into the lofty depth of  
 sleep."

All these references to the dead in Senghor's poetry are not conscious statements or pronouncements of belief. These are, on the contrary, images that rise in his mind not because he is *asserting* his "négritude" but because he is an African and he allows himself to be one. This matter of fact presence of the dead in a man's life and thinking, this natural communication with the ancestors is something nonexistent in European poetry. Senghor is conscious of this, he is aware that here is one of the things that differentiates him basically from European culture and which is therefore a potential cause of misunderstanding. This is what he expresses in his short story poem "The Totem":

I must hide him in my most secret veins,  
 The ancestor whose storm skin is furrowed with lightning and  
 thunder.

My guardian animal, I must hide him,  
 Lest I break the barrier of scandals.  
 He is my loyal blood demanding loyalty  
 Protecting my naked pride against  
 Myself and arrogance of luckier races.

Thus, as this poem also implies, even the most sophisticated African still carries his "guardian animal" in his "most secret veins". However much he has absorbed of European culture, however much he may be assimilated to it outwardly he remains an African in some of his most basic human attitudes. His conscious identification with the movement of "négritude" merely allows him to acknowledge these emotions and responses, which he might otherwise try to suppress.

Senghor then is not merely a Frenchified African who tries to give exotic interest to his French poems; he is an African who uses the French language to express his African soul.

## NIGHT OF SINE

BY L. S. SENGHOR

Woman, rest on my brow your balsam hands, your hands gentler than fur.  
The tall palmtrees swinging in the nightwind  
Hardly rustle. Not even cradlesongs.  
The rhythmic silence rocks us.

Listen to its song, listen to the beating of our dark blood, listen,  
To the beating of the dark pulse of Africa in the midst of lost villages.  
Now the tired moon sinks towards its bed of slack water,  
Now the peals of laughter even fall asleep, and the bards themselves  
Dandle their heads like children on the backs of their mothers.  
Now the feet of the dancers grow heavy and heavy grows the tongue of the  
singers.

This is the hour of the stars and of the night that dreams  
And reclines on this hill of clouds, draped in her long gown of milk.  
The roofs of the houses gleam gently. What are they telling so  
confidentially to the stars?

Inside the hearth is extinguished in the intimacy of bitter and sweet scents.  
Woman, light the lamp of clear oil, and let the children in bed talk about  
their ancestors, like their parents.

Listen to the voice of the ancients of Elissa. Like we, exiled,  
They did not want to die, lest their seminal flood be lost in the sand.  
Let me listen in the smoky hut for the shadowy visit of propitious souls,  
My head on your breast glows, like a kuskus ball smoking out of the fire,  
Let me breathe the smell of our dead, let me contemplate and repeat their  
living voice, let me learn

To live before I sink, deeper than the diver, into the lofty depth of sleep.

# THE EYES OF THE STATUE

BY CAMARA LAYE

She stopped walking for a moment: ever since she set out she had been feeling as though she had earned a moment's rest; and she took stock of her surroundings. From the top of the hill on which she stood she saw spread out before her a great expanse of country.

Far away in the distance was a town or rather the remains of a town, for there was no trace of movement to be seen near it, none of the signs of industry which would suggest the presence of a town. Perhaps it was merely distance which hid from her sight all the comings and goings and possibly once within the town she would be borne along on the urgent flood of activity. Perhaps . . . . .

— From this distance anything is possible, she was surprised to hear herself say aloud.

She mused on how, from such a vast distance, it seemed still as though anything could happen, and she fervently believed that if any changes were to take place they would occur in the intervals when the town lay hidden by the trees and undergrowth.

There had been many of these intervals and they were nearly always such very long intervals, so long that it was now by no means certain that she was approaching the town by the most direct route, for there was absolutely nothing to guide her and she had to struggle continually against a maze of branches and tangled thorns and to pick her way around the intertwining swamps. She had tried very hard to cross those swamps but all she had succeeded in doing was getting her shoes and the hem of her skirt soaking wet and she had been obliged to retrace her steps hurriedly, the surface of the ground was so treacherous.

She couldn't really see the town and she wasn't going straight towards it except for the rare moments when she topped a rise, there the ground was sparsely planted with broom and heath and she was far above the thickly wooded depths of the valleys. But no sooner had she finished scrambling up the hills than she had to plunge once more into the bushes and try to force her way through the impenetrable undergrowth and everything got in her way, cutting off her view and making her walk painful and dangerous again.

"Perhaps I really ought to go back," she said to herself; and certainly that would have been the most sensible thing to do. But in fact she didn't slacken her pace in the least, as though something away over there was calling to her, as though the distant town were calling. But how could an empty town summon her. A silent deserted town!

For the closer she came to it the more she felt that it must really be a deserted city, a ruined city in fact. The height of the bushes and the dense tangled undergrowth about her feet convinced her. If the town had still been

inhabited, even by a few people, its surroundings would never have fallen into such confusion, where she had been wandering around for hours; surely she would have found, instead of this tangled jungle, the orderly outskirts other towns could boast; but here there were neither roads nor paths, everything betokened disorder and decay.

Yet once more she wondered whatever forced her to continue her walk, but she could find no reply; she was following an irresistible urge! She would have been hard put to it to say how this impulse had arisen or indeed to decide just how long she had been obeying it. And perhaps it was the case that if only she followed the impulse for long enough she would no longer be capable of defying it, although there was no denying that it was grossly irrational. At any rate the urge must have been there for a very long time, as she could tell from the tiredness of her limbs; and moreover it was still very close—couldn't she feel it brimming up within her, pressing on her breast with each eager breath she drew. Then all of a sudden she realized that she was face to face with it.

— The urge is me, she cried.

She proclaimed it defiantly but without knowing what she was defying and triumphantly although unaware of her opponent; whom had she defied, and what could she be triumphing over? It was not simply that she was identifying herself with the strange compulsion in order to get to know more of it and of herself. She was obliged to admit that the urge was indefinable, as her own being forever escaped definition.

After one final struggle with the branches and obstacles, and after skirting one more morass, she suddenly emerged in front of the city, or what remained of it. It was really only the traces of a town, no more than the traces, and in fact just what she had feared to find ever since she set out, but so sad, so desolate, she could never have imagined such desolation. Scarcely anything but rough heaps of walls remained. The porticos were crumbling and most of the roofs had collapsed; only a column here or a fragment of a wall there proclaimed the former splendour of the peristyles; as for the remaining buildings, they seemed to waver uncertainly, as though on the very point of tumbling. Trees had thrust their branches through broken windows, great tufts of weeds pushed upwards the blocks and the marble slabs, the statues had fallen from their niches, all was ruined and burst asunder.

"I wonder why these remains seem so different from the forests and bush I have come through already?" She said to herself. There was no difference except for the desolation and loss, rendered all the more poignant by the contrast with what had once been. "What am I searching for here?" she asked herself once more. "I ought never to have come."

— Many people used to come here once, said an old man who appeared out of the ruins.

— Many people? she said, I have not seen a single soul.

— Nobody has been here for a very long time, said the old man. But there was a time when crowds of people visited the ruins. Is that what you have come for?

— I was coming towards the city.

— It certainly was a great city once. But you have arrived too late. Surely you must have been delayed on the road.

— I should not have been so late but for my battles with the trees and undergrowth and all my detours around the swamps. If only they hadn't held me back . . .

— You should have come by the direct route.



— The direct route? she exclaimed. You cannot have any conception of the disorder round about this place.

— Alright, alright, he said, I do have some idea of it. As a matter of fact when I saw that people had stopped coming, I guessed how it was. Perhaps there isn't any road left?

— There isn't even a bush path!

— What a pity, he said, it was such a fine town, the most beautiful city in all the continent.

— And now, what is it? she said.

— What is it? he replied dismally.

With his stick he began to mow down the nettles which rose thick and menacing about them.

— Look at this, he said.

She saw, in the midst of the nettles, a fallen statue, green with moss, a humiliated statue. It cast upon her a dead, grey, glance. Presently she became aware that the look was not really dead, only blind, as the eyes were without pupils, and it was in fact a living gaze, as alive as a look could be. A cry came from it, an appealing cry. Was the statue bewailing its loneliness and neglect? The lips drooped pitifully.

— Who is it? she asked.

— He was the ruler who lived in this place. His rooms can still be seen.

— Why don't you set up the statue over there? she said. It would be better there, than amongst all these nettles.

— That is what I wanted to do. As soon as the statue fell from its alcove I wanted to put it back but I simply hadn't the strength. These stone sculptures are terribly heavy.

— I know, she replied, and after all it is merely a stone sculpture.

But was it merely carved stone? Could sculptured stone have cast upon her such a piercing glance? Perhaps, then, it wasn't mere stone. And even if it were nothing more than mere stone, the fact remained that for all the nettles and moss and the vagaries of fortune which it had endured, this stone would still outlast man's life. No, it could not be mere stone. And with this sort of distress in its look, this cry of distress . . . .

— Would you care to visit his rooms? asked the old man.

— Yes, take me there, she answered.

— Pay particular attention to the columns, he told her. No doubt there is only one hall left here now, but when you take into consideration the number of broken and fallen columns it does look as though there used to be at least ten halls.

With the end of his stick he pointed out the marble stumps and debris of broken slabs buried in the grass.

— This gateway must have been exceedingly high, he said, gazing upwards.

— It can't have been higher than the palace, surely, she said.

— How can we tell? I have never seen it any more than you have: by the time I arrived here it had already fallen into the grass; but those who were here before my time declared that it was an astonishing entrance. If you could put all this debris together again I dare say you would get a surprise. But who could tackle such a task?

He shrugged his shoulders and continued: You would need to be a giant, to have the hands and the strength of a giant.

— Do you really believe that a giant . . . .

— No, he replied. Only the ruler himself, who had it erected, could do it. He could certainly manage it.

She gazed at the niches where great tufts of grass presumed to replace the statues. There was one space, larger than all the rest, where the weeds grew particularly ostentatiously, like a flaming torch.

— That is the niche, over there, where he used to stand before his fall among the nettles, he remarked.

— I see, she said. But now there is nothing left but wild grass and the memory of his agony.

— He used to find this city and his palace trying enough. He personally supervised the building of the entire place. He intended this town to be the biggest and this palace the highest, he wanted them built to his own scale. Now he is dead, his heart utterly broken.

— But could he have died any other way?

— No, I suppose he carried his own death within him, like us all. But he had to carry the fate of a felled Goliath.

By this time they had reached the foot of a staircase and he pointed out a little door at the end of the corridor on the left.

— That is where I live, he told her. It is the old porter's lodge. I suppose I could have found somewhere a little more spacious and less damp, but after all, I am not much more than a caretaker: in fact, a guide is only a caretaker.

So saying, he began to make his way painfully up the steps; he was a decrepit old man.

— You are looking at me? I know I'm not much better than the palace! All this will crumble down one day; soon all this will crumble down on my head and it won't be a great loss! But perhaps I shall crumble before the palace.

— The palace is older, she said.

— Yes, but it is more robust. They don't build like that nowadays.

— What have you been saying, she demanded, you are not stone! Why compare your body to a palace?

— Did I compare myself to a palace? I don't think so. My body is certainly no palace, not even a ruined one. Perhaps it is like the porter's lodge where I live and perhaps I was wrong to call it damp and dark, perhaps I should have said nothing about it . . .

But I must pause for breath: these stairs . . . at my age no one likes climbing stairs . . .

And he wheezed noisily, pressing his hand over his heart as though to subdue its frantic beating.

— Let us go, he said at last, up the few remaining steps.

They climbed a little higher and reached a landing with a great door opening off it, a door half wrenched from its hinges.

— Here are the rooms, he said.

She saw an immense apartment, frightfully dilapidated; the roof had partly collapsed, leaving the rafters open to the sky; daylight streamed in upon the debris of tiles and rubbish strewn upon the floor. But nothing could take from the chamber its harmonious proportions with its marble panels, its tapestry and paintings, the bold surge of its columns, and the deep alcoves between them. It was all still beautiful, in spite of being three quarters ruined; the torn and rotten tapestries and the peeling paintings were still beautiful: so were the cracked stained glass windows and although the panelling was practically torn away, the grandeur of the original conception remained.

— Why have you let everything deteriorate to this extent? she asked.

— Why indeed? But now it is too late to do anything about it.

— Is it really too late?

— Now that the master is no longer here . . . he tapped the panels with his stick.

— I don't know how the walls are still standing, he said, they may last a fair time yet. But the rain deluges through the roof and windows and loosens the stones. And then when the winter storms come! It is those violent storms which destroy everything.

He dislodged a scrap of mortar.

— Just look, its no more than a bit of grey dust. I can't think why the blocks don't fall apart. The damp has destroyed everything.

— Was this the only room the master had? she asked.

— He had hundreds of them and all of them richly furnished. I've pushed the movable stuff into one of the smaller rooms which were less damaged.

He opened a door concealed in the panelling.

— Here is some of it, he said.

She beheld a jumble of carved furniture, ornaments, carpets and crockery.

— Gold dishes, please note. The master would eat off nothing but gold. And look at this — here he is in his robes of state. He pointed to a canvas where the face of the statue was portrayed.

The eyes were marvellously expressive, they were so even in the statue, although the sculptor had given them no pupils, but here they were infinitely more expressive and they look which they gave was one of anguish: "Is no one left near me?" they seemed to ask. And the droop of the mouth replied, "No-one". The man had known they would all forsake him, he had long foreseen it. Nevertheless she, she had come! She had fought through the bush and she had wandered round the swamps, she had felt fatigue and despair overwhelming her, but she had triumphed over all these obstacles and she had come, she had come at last. Had he not guessed she would come? Yet possibly this very foresight had but accentuated the bitter line of his set lips. "Yes", said those lips, "someone will come, when all the world has ceased to call . . . But someone who will be unable to soothe my distress . . .

She swung round: this reproach was becoming unbearable, and not only this reproach, which made all her goodwill seem useless, but rather the cry of abandon, the wild lonely appeal in his look.

— We can do nothing, nothing at all for him, the old man declared. And she replied.

Is there ever anything we can do? she sighed. In her innermost being she felt the anguish of this look; one might have thought it was she who cried, that the cry of loneliness welled from her own lonely heart.

— Perhaps you can do something, he said. You are still young. Although you may not be able to do anything for yourself, you might perhaps help others.

— You know very well that I cannot even do that, she said.

She seemed overwhelmed, as though she bore the ruins on her own shoulders.

— Are there still more rooms? she asked him?

— Lots of them. But it is getting late, the sun is sinking.

Daylight was fading fast. The light had become a soft, rosy glow, a light which was kinder to details, and in it the great room took on a new aspect; the paintings and panels regained a freshness which was far from theirs by right. This quick glow was the gentlest of lights. But not even this light could calm a tormented heart.

— Come along, called the old man.

— Yes, she answered.

She imagined that once she went out of this hall and its adjoining storeroom her heart would perhaps calm down; she thought that perhaps she might forget the great cry coming from the storeroom; yes, if only she could get away from this palace, leave these ruins, surely she could forget it. But was not the cry inside herself?

— The cry is within me, she exclaimed.

— Stop thinking about it, advised the old man. If you hear anything it's just because the silence has got on your nerves. Tomorrow you will hear nothing.

— But it is a terrible cry.

— The swans have an awful cry too, he remarked.

— Swans?

— Yes, the swans. To look at them gliding over the water you might never believe it. Have you ever happened to hear them cry? But of course not, you are scarcely more than a child and with less sense than one and you probably imagine that they sing. Listen, formerly there were lots of swans here, they were at the very gate of the palace; sometimes the lake was covered with them like white blossoms. Visitors used to throw scraps to them.

Once the tourists stopped coming, the swans died. No doubt they had lost the habit of searching for food themselves and so they died. Very well, never, do you hear me, never, did I hear a single song coming from the pond.

— Why do you have to tell me all this? Have I ever told you I believe in swan's song? You didn't need to speak to me like that.

— No, maybe I shouldn't have said it, or I should have said it less suddenly at least. I'm sorry. I even believed in the swan's song myself once. You know how it is, I am old and lonely and I have got into the habit of talking to myself. I was talking to myself then . . . I once believed that the lord of this palace, before he died, sang a swan song. But no, he cried out. He cried so loudly that . . .

— Please tell me no more, she begged.

— Alright, I suppose we shouldn't think about all that . . . meanwhile let's go.

He carefully closed the storeroom door and they made their way towards the exit.

— Did you mean to leave the door of the big room open? she asked once they had reached the landing.

— It hasn't been shut for a long time, he replied. Besides, there is nothing to fear. No one comes here now.

— But I came.

He glanced at her.

— I keep wondering why you came, he said. Why did you?

— How can I tell, she said.

Her visit was futile. She had crossed a desert of trees, and bush and swamps; and why? Had she come at the summoning of that anguished cry from the depth of the statue's and the picture's eyes? What way was there of finding out? And moreover it was an appeal to which she could not respond, an appeal beyond her power to help. No, this impulse which had moved her to hasten towards the town had been mad from the start.

— I don't know why I came, she repeated.

— You shouldn't take things to heart like that. These painters and carvers are so crafty, you know, they can make you realize things you would never have considered. Take that statue and the portrait, for instance. Have you noticed the look in the eyes. We begin by wondering where they found such

a look and eventually we realize they have taken it from ourselves; and these are the paradoxes they would be the first to laugh at. You should laugh too.

— But these paradoxes as you call them, which come from the depth of our being, what if we cannot find them there?

— What do you find within yourself? he answered her.

— I have already told you: unbearable loneliness.

— Yes, he said, there is something of that in each one of us.

— But in me . . . . .

— No, not more than in anyone else, he insisted. Don't imagine that others are any less alone. But who wants to admit that? All the same, it is not an unendurable state of affairs; it is quite bearable in fact. Solitude . . . . Listen, solitude isn't what you imagine. I don't want to run away from my solitude; it is the last desirable thing left me, it is my only wealth, a great treasure, of ultimate value.

"Is he just saying that to comfort me," she wondered. "But it is no consolation, a shared solitude can be no consolation. The sharing only makes the solitude doubly lonely".

Aloud she said, That doesn't console me in the least.

— I didn't think it would, he replied. They had by now reached the foot of the staircase and the old man showed her the little corridor leading to his room.

— My lodge is here.

— Yes, I know, she said. You told me already.

— But I haven't told you everything: I didn't say that my room is right beneath the staircase. When visitors used to climb up there in throngs they were walking over my lodge. Do you understand?

— Yes.

— No, you don't understand at all, you don't realize that they were marching on my head, wiping their feet on my hair. I had plenty of hair in those days.

— But they weren't really wiping their feet, she said, they . . . .

— Don't you think it was humiliating enough anyway?

She did not know how to reply. The old man seemed slightly crazed: some of what he said was very sensible but a lot of it was sheer nonsense. "The solitude has gone to his head," she told herself, and she looked at him afresh. He was certainly very old. There must be times when age and loneliness together . . . Aloud she remarked — I don't know. And then, all of a sudden,

— What made you say that solitude is an ultimate good?

— How very young you are, was his only reply, you should never have come here. He made off towards his lodge, saying:

— I'm going to prepare a meal.

— I shall rest here awhile, she said as she climbed the steps.

— Yes, do have a rest, you've certainly earned one. I shall call you when the food is ready.

— She sat down and watched the evil weeds, the nettles were by far the most numerous and reminded her of the ocean: they were like a great green sea which surged around the palace trying to drown it and ultimately they would completely engulf it. What could mere stones do against such a powerful wave? A wave with the deceptive smoothness of velvety leaves, a wave which hid its poisons and its sorcery beneath a velvet touch. It seemed to her fevered imagination that the wave was already rising. Or was it simply the darkness?



Was it night, which was burying the lowest steps? No, it was really the wave of nettles, imperceptibly advancing in its assault upon the palace. A transient attack, no doubt. Probably this sea of nettles had tides like the ocean. And perhaps it wasn't merely a simple tide, perhaps . . . .

She leapt to her feet, the tide was about her ankles. She climbed several steps and the tide rose as quickly.

— Caretaker, she screamed.

But she could no longer see the porter's lodge; perhaps the sea had already entered the room, while she was sitting down. She couldn't be certain now whether it had a door which shut. Even suppose it did have, how could a door stop such a wave?

"What is to become of me?" she asked herself. She climbed a few more steps, but the waves continued to pursue her, it really was following her. She paused; perhaps if she stopped, the wave in its turn might stop rising. But instead it flowed right up to her, covering her shoes. Feverishly she resumed her upward flight and gained the landing opposite the doorway of the main hall, but she was horrified to realise that the wave was there almost as soon, it was inches away. Must she drown in those horrible weeds?

She rushed to open the storeroom door, only to find that the sea had beaten her and had born everything away, literally washed off the face of the earth: there was no longer any storeroom left! It had been engulfed beneath the flood of nettles, with its furniture and tapestries and dishes and with the portrait as well. Only the cry, the great cry of anguish remained, and it had become vaster and louder, more piercing and heartrending than ever, it swelled to fill the whole earth! It seemed to her as though nothing could silence it any more and that whatever she did she could never escape, her heart could never escape again; yet at the same time she tried to bolt the door upon it as though in spite of all she knew she might evade it yet. But what could she escape to? There was no way of escape left open, it was either the cry or the flood. She was a prey to this cry and in no time she would be the victim of the flood. She was trapped between two floods, the one which swallowed up the storeroom and was lying in wait menacingly on its threshold, and the other one which had pursued her step by step up the stairs and across the great hall. She had no choice but to cast herself into one of these two floods which were soon about to merge. Placed as she was she could neither advance nor retreat.

— Caretaker, she shrieked!

But did she actually scream? No sound came from her lips, terror was throttling her, it had her by the throat: she only imagined she had shouted.

At the second attempt she could not even pretend to herself that she had shouted: she no longer even had the will to cry out; she realised that her terror was so extreme that she could never scream again. Nevertheless she continued to struggle hopelessly, she fought and struggled silently and in vain.

And meanwhile the flood was steadily rising beyond her ankles and up her legs; confident of its power it rose more rapidly than ever.

Then, whilst she was struggling and trying desperately to regain her voice, she suddenly caught sight of the statue: the sea of weeds had lifted it and was tossing it on its waves.

She stopped struggling to watch it and at once she could see that its eyes were looking at her just as they had done when the old man had first thrust aside the nettles. It was the same look, the same cry of distress and bitter loneliness.

She longed to awake from her nightmare and she tried once more to call for help, but in vain . . . . Must she really die alone beneath the flood of weeds,

all alone?.....She hid her face in her arms.....

A little later she felt a blow on her forehead and she believed that her skull burst open.

*translated by Una MacLean*



# LANGSTON HUGHES

## AFRICA

Sleepy giant,  
You've been resting awhile.  
Now I see the thunder  
And the lightning  
In your smile.  
Now I see  
The storm clouds  
In your waking eyes:  
The Thunder,  
The wonder,  
And the new  
Surprise.  
Your every step reveals  
The new stride  
In your thighs.

## NOT FOR PUBLICATION

It would be too bad if Christ  
Were to come back black.  
There are so many churches  
Where he could not pray  
In the U.S.A.,  
Where entrance to negroes  
No matter how sanctified,  
Is denied,  
Where race,  
*Not* religion,  
Is glorified.  
But talk about it . . . . .  
You may be  
Crucified.

SO?

I could tell you,  
If I wanted to,  
What makes me  
What I am.  
But I don't  
Really want to tell —  
And you don't  
Give a damn.

AWE

I look with awe  
Upon the human race  
And God  
Who sometimes spits  
Right in its face.

AFRICAN QUESTION MARK

Don't know why I,  
Black,  
Must still stand with my back  
To the last frontier of fear  
In my own land.

Don't know why I now  
Must turn into a  
Mau Mau  
And lift my hand  
Against my fellow man  
To live in my own land.

But it is so —  
And being so,  
All I know:  
*For you and me*  
*There's woe.*

# SENUFO SCULPTURE

BY B. HOLAS

The Senufo are a vigorous tribe occupying the Northern part of the Ivory Coast. In their religious ritual sacred woodcarvings play an exceptionally large part.

The production of woodcarvings is concentrated in the region of Korhogo, and particularly in one of the quarters of the town itself. This quarter, called Koko, shelters several dozen "daleubele" or "kpembele", that is professional woodcarvers, who form a closed social group and live exclusively by their trade.

The enormous quantity of masks, figures and divers utensils seems surprising at first, but can be explained by the varied use to which these objects are being put. In fact the intensity and frequent occurrence of ceremonies speeds up the decay of woodcarvings. Moreover conditions for preservation are not always favourable; large number of pieces are left without shelter in the middle of the sacred groves (sinzanga) in which initiation ceremonies take place.

Certain statues of lesser importance in the ritual, like the divinatory images, are sometimes in use only for a short time. It also happens that after receiving an offering and having accomplished its role as mediator between the worshipper and the invisible power, an "ndebele" is abandoned and even desecrated.

The large sacred poro masks, on the other hand, will continue in use until the master of the sacred grove (sinzangafolo) decides that a mask is too decayed and ought to be replaced.

The products of the "daleubele" could be grouped into two large categories. First, objects made to serve in the ritual of initiation societies and secondly, objects belonging to more or less individual cults that exist outside the poro

## I. SCULPTURES USED IN THE INITIATION SOCIETIES. MASKS.

The Senufo have two types of mask, of very different appearance: the small, delicate mask with anthropomorphic features, and the large mask composed of animal characters, heavy and sometimes roughly carved. The two different types of masks play similar or complimentary parts, however, specially in the annual funeral ceremonies organised by the poro society.

The anthropomorphic masks (commonly known as "kpeligue" or "kpelie") are executed with taste and delicacy. They usually show an elongated human face to which is added eccentric detail that cannot be understood, except by the initiates, but of which the aesthetic appeal is always powerful.

The revelation of the "kpeligue", its ritual use and its mystic significance takes place during the ceremony called "the first cutting of the beard", a rite marking the admission of the neophyte adolescent into the adult community of the poro.

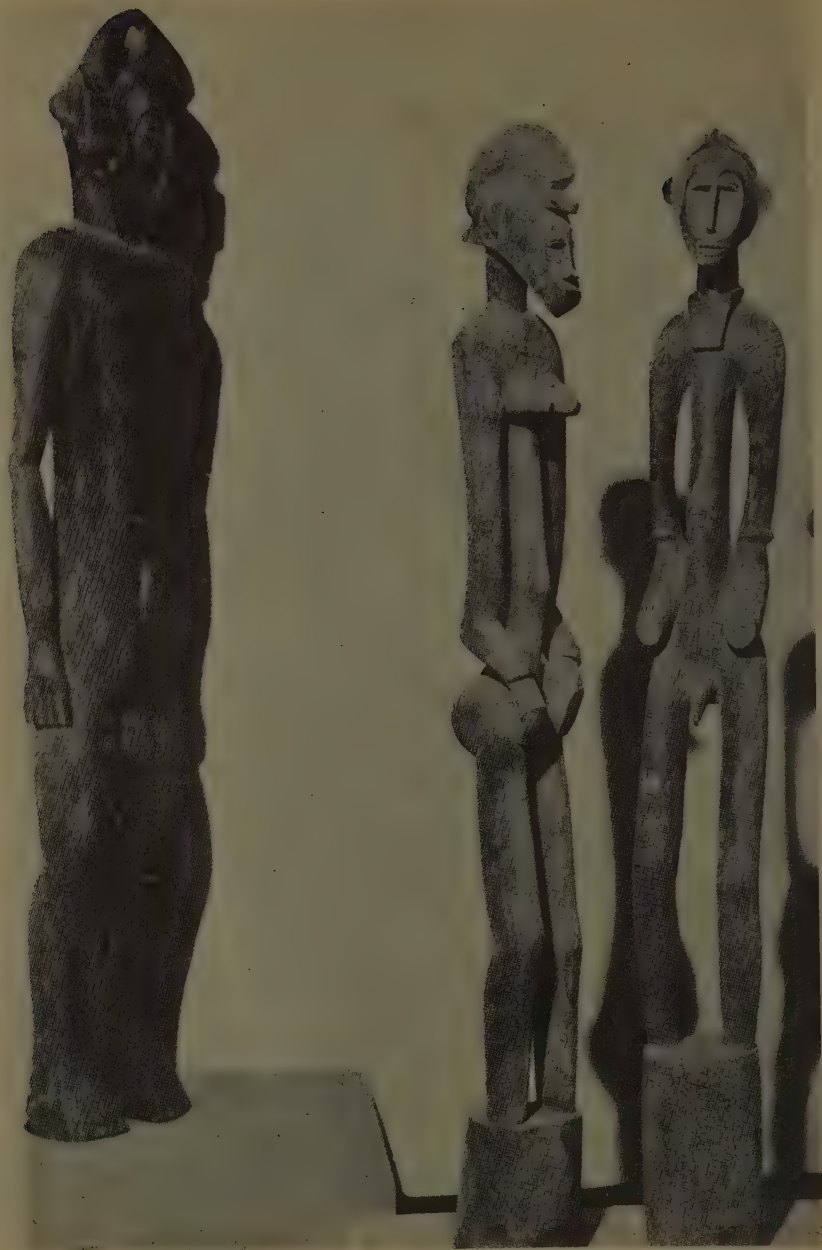
A mask of similar function but different appearance is found among an archaic and secluded group of Senufo, the Fodombele. This mask called "deguele" consists of a figure without arms on a spherical base. The head is prognathic and the body covered with vertical incisions.











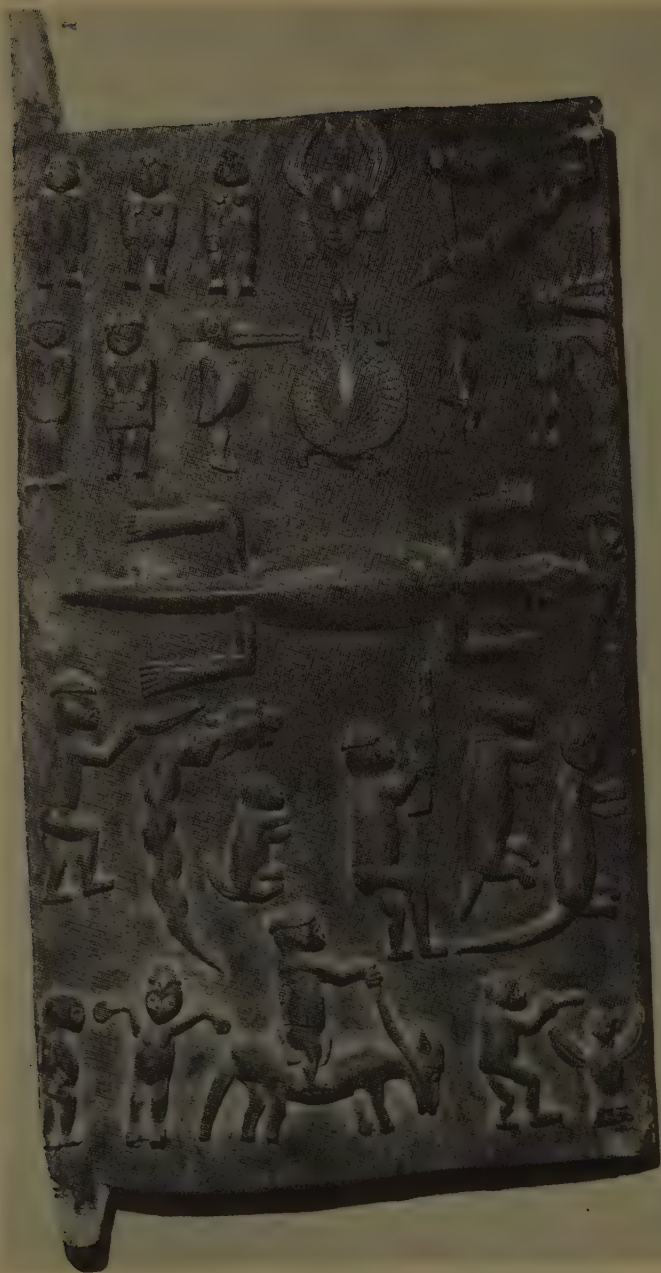












Animal masks are of different types. The "wabele", "korobla", "kagaba" and "nassolo" are produced by different sub-groups of Senufo, all having similar liturgic functions, however.

The "wabele" is characterised by an unusually bestial expression. With this the sculptor tries to express the "primordial disorder" or "chaos" that is the state of the world before it was organised by the female deity Katieleo. This mask is characterized by a cup on the crown of the head. The cup is filled with magic medicines which are said to ensure a favourable outcome of the ceremony. The "wabele" have always got long horns and sometimes are surmounted by a chameleon or a bird, animals that are associated with the sacred history of creation.

Thé "wabele" usually appear in pairs. But there is also a form called "waniougu" which consists of a double-sexed double head, which appears alone.

The "korobola" mask differs from the "wabele", because it has neither the horns, nor the cup, nor the emblematic animals surmounting the head. With rare exception this mask is only found among the group of the Dieli, who use it in their initiation ceremonies. These are, however, in a state of rapid decline.

The "kagaba" is found among the Senufo Nafara in the region of Sine-mantiali. It consists of a roof-shaped cover, made of vegetable fibres, which covers the dancer completely, with only his feet showing. It is painted with symbolical figures and a small mask with long horns and bull like features is fixed vertically to the top. At the back a pompon tail is fastened. The head is the only piece that is carved in wood. It is often of real artistic value. This mask is carried by a chosen dancer from the poro society.

A large and perfected variation of this mask is the "nassolo." Its use is practically identical. This is an enormous half cylindrical body, which evokes the idea of a buffalo. It may be more than three metres long. The head resembles that of the "kagaba" but it is fixed horizontally. The body is painted in red, white and black. It is carried by two men who dance in harmony. With the help of a friction instrument they produce a sound imitating the lowing of the buffalo.

#### STATUES.

The large statues of the poro are less common and less accessible than the numerous small figures that play a part in divination rituals. The poro figures play a symbolic rather than an active part in manifestations of the cult. Unlike the masks, which are thought to be endowed with forces that are generally feared, the two groups of statues are not potentially dangerous. Statues are frequently present in the sacred enclosure for the initiation of men, but they are by no means compulsory among the Senufo.

Among the archaic group of the Fodombele one finds elongated statues representing human beings of both sexes. (Kpondosiong). They rise from a heavy base, with which the novices beat the soil in nocturnal procession lit up by torches, in order thus to enter into spiritual contact with the dead ancestors. The type of statue called "kpele" looks vaguely like a "kpondosiong" without arms or face. This is found exclusively in initiation ceremonies of the koufola, one of the numerous Senufo groups. The ritual images of the "poropia" are half human, half animal. They are characterized by the variation of forms and the unusual size: they may be between one and two metres tall, sometimes even more.

Those that are anthropomorphic usually represent the primordial couple. The statues in bird form show a surprising combination of the body of a pregnant

woman with the head of the large hornbill of the savannah, the ideogrammatic bird of the Senufo. These latter figures are known as "poropianong" that is mother of the poropia.

The ceremonial staffs known as "daleu" have a special function. The upper end is decorated with a human figure, nearly always feminine. These staffs are used by young men during the initiation ceremonies when they are being prepared for the grade called "tiolo".

Parallel to the men's initiation society is that of the women. This has inspired its own form of carving to serve specific ritual purposes. They mostly express the idea of fertility and procreation. The most typical figure is a seated mother nourishing her child. Generally she is called "nong" and she has a mystic connection with the female deity "Katieleo", who presides at the initiations.

Around the "nong" are grouped other auxiliary figures such as the "tie" (a standing figure with prominent breasts), the primordial couple known under the vague name of "poropia" (sometimes accompanied by a small mother bird), the "fuo" (the great python in connection with a sacred person called "irigufolo"), the "no" a guinea fowl materializing the idea of female duties, mainly of housework and so on.

Decorated with ornamental designs revealing the symbols of initiation are the carved doors that close some religious buildings, for example the "kagba", the great meeting house in the sacred grove. The doors are also found outside the limits of the poro enclosure, for example on the shrines of the "dibi" cult. In the latter case the decorative motives may represent ritual scenes, such as a funeral, or profane ones like hunting, public festivals and farm work.

Among the great variety of Senufo percussion instruments, the large carved drum can be regarded as a real work of art. It has a single membrane which is fixed with large pegs and it is mounted on four feet. Its use is exclusively ritual in the initiations of both sexes. It is called "pliewo".

#### SCULPTURES EMPLOYED IN INDIVIDUAL CULTS.

All the sculptures described so far have a collective character, and therefore a social function to fulfil. But there are a multitude of other carvings that have a more intimate liturgical function, and also a more limited one.

While all masks have a strictly collective character, statues may be created to establish contact with the divine messenger "irigufolo" who is approached with a sacrifice and asked to transmit the human prayer to the great deities that are not directly accessible. Nevertheless even in this situation a layman, inexperienced in ritual techniques cannot act alone, he must have the assistance of a titled specialist (a man or, more often, a woman) called the "sandugu".

After consulting the oracle the priest may recommend the acquisition of a protecting statue called "ndebele". Incredible numbers of these figures are found in Senufo country. Usually these figures are small and their aesthetic merit varies a great deal.



# ROGER MAIS

BY SANGODARE AKANJI

The growth of the West Indian novel during the last decade is one of the most fascinating literary phenomena of our time. West Africa has as yet nothing to set aside this burst of literary activity on the Islands, though there are signs to indicate that we may be just at the beginning of a similar phase.

One of the most fascinating characters among West Indian writers was Roger Mais, who died at the age of fifty in 1955, leaving behind three novels.

Roger Mais was a powerful writer, with a vivid style and a technique of his own. All his novels are concerned with the poorer strata of population in the West Indies and some critics have complained about his "preoccupation with violence, squalor and pessimism." But although Roger Mais' novels abound with sex and crime and poverty and suffering he is not a sensationalist writer. Nor does he romanticise "picturesque" life in the slums of Jamaica. He is simply moved by great human compassion and a tragic sense of suffering to describe the people he sees around him:

His first book "The Hills Were Joyful Together" is set in a Jamaican backyard, in the slums. The story is packed with characters, men and women and children, hardworking craftsmen and gangsters, and toiling housewives and prostitutes, men of courage and vision and dreamers and delinquents. They are all thrown together in the same backyard and they all live in the same squalor, with little hope of ever improving their condition. Yet in all the dirt, the poverty and disease with which their lives are beset, inspite of the fights and hatred into which they are involved they are capable of great human emotions, and love and tenderness and friendship and passion are experienced by them with unusual intensity. The world Roger Mais describes is a hard one, but it is also full of vitality and emotional depth. Mais plots a story around everyone of his characters and intertwines their stories into a huge colourful tapestry. He follows the story of one set of characters only for a short while, then breaks off and takes up the tale of another and so on, picking up threads all the time and then interrupting again. The effect of this technique is exciting and bewildering. It opens up a vast vision of a crowd of people all engaged in the different pursuits of their lives. We are never allowed to get involved too much in the fate of one person, because it is always set against that of others. We are not allowed to reach an emotional climax in the book, but are kept aloft, watching from a distance. The account of a murder may be intertwined with a story of lovemaking and a prison scene may be interrupted with a description of everyday life in the yard. It is rather like watching those canvasses of Pieter Breughel where dozens of peasants are engaged in different activities all over the picture and one keeps on discovering new people in different corners of the picture. For Roger Mais is not so much concerned with this or that individual, but with Man and his fate as such. He says in fact: "This is the story of man's life upon earth that formed him, shuddering

from birth to death with pity and terror because of the demons of light and darkness that inform all his days and night."

The first half of the book shows people in their everyday life at the backyard. This part of the book is full of singing and dancing and joking in spite of the misery and the hopelessness. We see the people at work, we see them quarrel and fight, we see them make love and deceive each other. But imperceptibly they move towards their separate fates. Nearly all fail to solve the problems of their lives and those who are most ambitious, who kick most violently against the cruel fate that does not allow them to break out of the narrow circle of slum life end in violent death.

The book is conceived more like a tragedy than like a novel. Most of the story is told in dialogue, and there are lyrical passages that, like choruses, relate the individual fate to universal suffering: "all Man's being is encompassed about from birth with dying . . . his separate death matters nothing . . ."

Only in the prison scenes the author temporarily becomes engaged and loses the great concept of the whole book. These scenes are in part written from personal experience, because the author went to jail for six months under the Defence Regulations for writing an article that was considered adverse to the war effort. Mais writes with particular bitterness about prison life and for a moment he ceases to be a novelist and becomes a social reformer. He introduces a parson with a social conscience into the story who goes and reads a passage from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the prison director. The introduction of this character rather weakens Roger Mais' cause. The reader, having experienced the horrors of prison through the reactions and emotional responses of the prisoner Surjue, now becomes merely irritated at the platitudinous preaching of the parson.

All in all "The Hills Were Joyful Together" reveals a writer of great virility and vision, who tends to spoil his own work by labouring the point and by confusing the separate tasks of the novelist and the preacher.

In the second novel "Brother Man", both the merits and the faults of the first book are emphasised.

The title hero of the book, "Bra Man", is a leader in the sect called Ras Tarafites. They are great readers and interpreters of the Bible and believe in faithhealing. They wear beards in imitation of Jesus and greet each other "peace an' love". Bra Man himself is a cobbler by profession and also known as a healer. The people in the neighbourhood are divided in their opinion about him. Some admire him as a holy man and a healer, some believe he is a charlatan and others think he is a bit mad. The author's sympathies are clearly on his side, but not until the end of the book, when Bra Man is deeply humiliated and suffers injustice and physical pain, does he win the readers full sympathy. also. Not that we doubt his sincerity, but Bra Man is a little self satisfied in his goodness and we suspect him of being a sentimental "do-gooder" who does not know the real answers to life. He is in fact rather demonstrative with his kindness and compassion. He speaks pompously and pronounces platitudes. Of a dead bird he proclaims: "It is one of God's creatures, and it was alive a little while back, and now it is dead, an' it didn't do no harm." To a young female admirer who asks him "Say, what is love, Bra Man?" he replies (after "looking at her earnestly, as though weighing the answer") "Love is everything. It is what created the world. It is what created you an' me, child, brought us into this world." Roger Mais remarks: "And somehow the words didn't sound banal coming from him." But the author fails to convince us. Too many of Bra' Man's sayings are rather trite. Roger Mais does not help the cause of his hero by making his antagonist a melodramatic figure rather than a character. His

opponent is Brother Ambo the Obeah man, who is also a kind of healer, but an "evil" one. It is not explained to us, what the "evil" of Obeah consists of, although it is insinuated that it is a kind of witchcraft. We are not shown Brother Ambo's practices, but are supposed to take it for granted that they are bad. The blurb on the dust jacket of the book says "It is a plain conflict between good and evil." Unfortunately the author has really oversimplified the situation in this unconvincing manner.

Only towards the end Bra' Man becomes convincing. A horrible and insane crime has been committed in the area by a bearded man. The people without asking many questions identify the bearded Ras Tarafites sect with the crime, and the mob attacks and wounds Bra' Man, heaping insults upon him and his brothers. The humility and gentleness with which Bra' Man bears his sufferings now really identifies him as a follower of Christ and gradually he wins back the esteem of the citizens who insulted him and even of those readers who found him a bit of a bore earlier on in the book.

Bra' Man has another antagonist in the book, or rather a counterpart: Papacita, a reckless gangster of the Jamaican underworld. Papacita does not really come into conflict with Bra' Man but his wild, tempestuous life acts as a foil to Bra' Man's subdued humility. While brother Ambo, the Obeah man, never comes to life at all, Papacita is perhaps Roger Mais' most vivid creation. The story of his passionate hate-love relationship with Girlie, is perhaps Roger Mais' most exciting piece of writing. Papacita is a full-blooded character who takes hold of life with both hands, always searching for the fullest enjoyment of the moment. His story runs parallel and is intertwined with that of Bra' Man and with his breath-taking adventures he often absorbs the attention of the reader rather more than actual hero of the book.

"Brother Man" contains, perhaps, Roger Mais' finest bits of writing. Apart from the exciting Girlie-Papacita scenes there are the beautiful choruses that introduce the different sections of the book. This is a successful development of the intercalations in "The Hills Were Joyful Together". Here the voices of the people in the lane serve as commentators to the story.

The weakness of "Brother Man" on the other hand is that the problem "good versus evil" has been posed much too simply and that the message of the book is laboured and therefore ineffective. A tendency towards sentimentality, that was as yet absent in his first book is counterbalanced by a lot of vigorous and virile scenes in "Brother Man", but it becomes the ruin of Roger Mais' last book: "Black Lightning".

"Black Lightning" is in a way the author's most ambitious book, but also his least successful. It is a story of loneliness and frustration. It is placed in a rural setting and the hero is Jake a blacksmith, who has the ambition to be a woodcarver. Jake has been deserted by his wife and he finds it difficult to make friends. His only companion is Amos, a crippled musician. But Jake is a tormented soul, who continues to ask himself "why" he wants Amos around the house. He has a vision of himself and Amos as David and Saul and tortures himself by thinking that perhaps he does not encourage Amos "for his own sake" but only "for the good that he got out of it." In spite of the genuine affection the two men have for each other, the friendship does not really produce happiness. Jake is too proud, too confused to ever admit his great affection. Because of this there is often a great irritation between the two. The book is full of frustrated, irritated conversations like these:

"You know something, Amos, I have a fancy to take a walk in the wood."

"Yes, that would be fine, Jake. You would like that. That would be just grand, when it gets a bit drier,"

"Yes."

"Couple of days from now it'll be grand in the wood again."

"Eh?"

"What we were talking about, Jake . . ."

"Awe, forget it."

"I thought you said . . ."

"Awe, forget it."

Jake is indeed a moody person, not easy to live with. His few friends are extremely tolerant and make all kinds of excuses for him. "He thinks too much" they say. In fact, Jake, is a sort of philosopher, constantly pondering over the meaning of death and suffering. Unfortunately the author does not allow us to look very deep into his mind. His preoccupation with metaphysical problems comes out in his conversations with Amos, and because Amos is a simple minded and down to earth fellow, these conversations never get very far:

"You scared of death, Amos?"

"Don't know Jake, I never thought about it. No man, I never give it a thought."

"You ought to," said Jake.

"Eh?"

"Every man ought to think about two things, sometime or other, life and death, Those two."

"Jesus, to hear you talk sometimes, you gimme the creeps."

"You scared of death, that's what. You shouldn't ought to be."

The author fails to impress us with the fact that Jake is a philosopher. He comes a little closer to make us see him as an artist. As an artist Jake's ideas are equally vague, but at least we see him labouring on his carving of Samson and pondering over the meaning he wants to put into it:

"If I could gather up all the suffering there is in this world . . . of all the folks who have lost their way in some kind of darkness, and of all who have known any kind of lack that human flesh and spirit can know . . ."

The statue becomes the great symbol of suffering and loneliness. Being alone with his carving Jake experiences a kind of masochistic joy of being alone and suffering. "A feeling that man is alone in the world, and sufficient, and not dependant on anyone." This is almost as sentimental as Amos, who says, commenting on their lives:

"Just a couple of God's creatures, born out in the cold. You an me. Kin. That's us."

This kind of sentimentality pervades the book. The characters are paralysed by it. Jake's wife "really" loves Jake but has deserted him. She knows him to be a difficult man to get on with. But she does nothing to reconstruct their relationship and is content to remark that Jake is "really big and good underneath".

Amos buries a dead bird who becomes "his secret". But all his knowledge of suffering and compassion even with animals do not help him to prevent Jake from going to his death.

Jake himself is the most sentimental of all. He sentimentalises his loneliness, his human relationships and even prosaic work as a blacksmith:

"From the day I fixed old Mother Bado's bedspring for her, her pains left her, and she never bothered with them since. You think that's nothing?"

The great blow is dealt to Jake's life by a strange, uncanny interference of fate. While he explains Samson to Amos during a thunderstorm he is suddenly struck blind. This increases his loneliness and his sense of frustration. He

becomes moodier and even more difficult to live with. Amos tries to analyse Jake's condition:

"You don't let anything go through you. Everything stops inside you....you are always fighting something."

In a sense all this was inherent in Jake's character from the start. He is embittered, because with all his feelings and lofty ideas he fails to reach other people and so he remains basically alone and frustrated. His ultimate despair would have been plausible even without the blinding.

The tragedy of Jake is set against the foil of happy relationships between minor characters. Glen, Jake's assistant in the forge, Bess the cook, her daughter Miriam and George the boy provide a perfect contrast to Jake, Amos and Estelle, Jake's wife. But their own story is little more than foil—there is little interaction with the main plot.

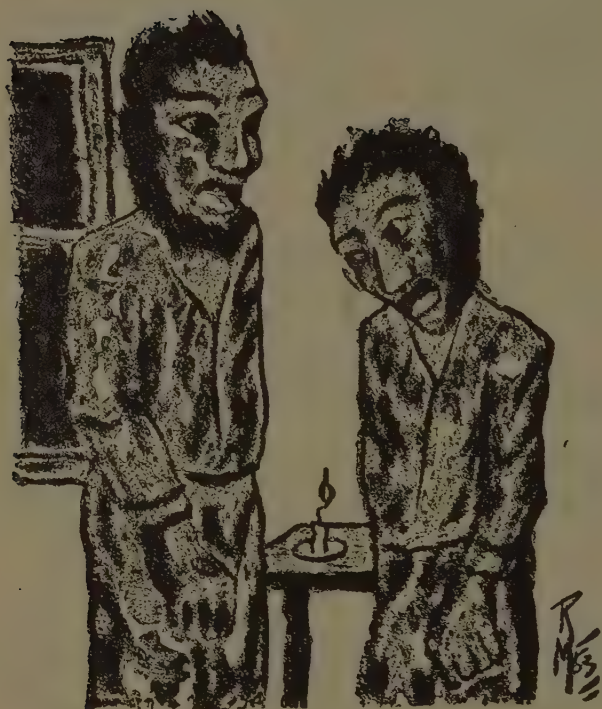
Roger Mais was not only a writer but also an artist. His illustrations to "Brother Man" reveal him as a sympathetic and human artist, well able to catch atmosphere and mood.

The drawings in this number of "Black Orpheus" are reprinted from "Brother Man" with kind permission of Mrs. Jessie Dayes, and Jonathan Cape, Publishers.

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# GOOD GIRL BAD BOY

BY SAMUEL SELVON

The way how some things does happen in life, you does really have to hold your head and bawl. But in a way, what happen ain't so important as who it happen to. I mean, in London you does bounce up with some characters what does make you think and ponder about mankind, men who don't conform at all with what logic and psychology say, men who, when the whole world turning right, would turn left. Society have rules where tests like that get put away in a safe place, but some fellars about the city who just barely managing to conform with normal behaviour, and you does wonder and shake your head and think that this is a hell of a world, *oui*.

That prelude come to mind because of what happen one evening with couple of the boys in Bayswater. Jarvis went round by Alfonso to see how he getting on, and by and by the two of them went out to take a walk and see the sharp things who does be moving about that part of the city by night.

Out on Bayswater-road who they should meet but Jupsingh coming down the road with a sharp thing, a real chic chick.

"Oh God!" Alfonso say. "Boy, look Jupsingh, he is a real ignorant test from Trinidad that I want you to meet."

"What happening, what happening man?" Jupsingh come up patting Alfonso on the shoulder. "Meet my fiancée, Pat."

The little thing shake hands with the boys. She had a babydoll face and she look like butter won't melt in she mouth. Jupsingh have on a colin-wilson with long sleeves that he keep pulling down to cover his fingers. He have a bottle of South African sherry in his hand.

"Which part you pick up that piece of skin, Jupsingh?" Alfonso pull him to one side and talking low.

"Listen man, I in a jam," Jupsingh say. "I bring this thing up with me from Woking and I ain't have no place to take she. I went by my cousin, but he ain't home. What you think, boy? You think she all right? You think I could sleep with she tonight?"

"Like you thirst bad," Alfonso say. "You can't come round by me, but let me ask Jarvis and see what happening. At least we could polish off the sherry."

So Alfonso ask Jarvis, and though Jarvis don't know Jupsingh he say all right, so they start to walk to his place. All this time Jupsingh only holding on to Pat arm as if he fraid she might disappear suddenly and he turning to Alfonso and asking him if he think he could get through with Pat, and Alfonso telling him to take it easy, don't rush things.

But Jupsingh as if he rusty and anxious to hit one, and up in Jarvis room he sweating and restless, and every now and then he putting his hand to his face and saying Jesus Christ, and kissing a sign of the cross that he have pin on to the front of the colin-wilson, and he knocking wood. He knocking chair, table, wall — anything make out of wood in Jarvis room.

"I didn't know you from Trinidad, man," Jupsingh start up old-talk with

Jarvis. "You don't know me? You don't know the Jupsingh family? Open the bottle of sherry. So what you think? So what you think about the thing, boy? She all right? You think I could hit it?"

This time Alfonso getting in a word with Pat.

"Where you from?" Alfonso saying in a soft voice.

"From Ireland," Pat say, crossing her legs and pulling down the skirt. One of her foot was bandage up around the ankle.

"What happen to your foot?" Alfonso ask.

"I fell off my bicycle," Pat said.

"We must go to Ireland one day," he tell Jarvis, "it have nice people there."

Jarvis open the bottle and pass drinks around. Pat had one and Jupsingh jockeying she to have another, and trying to full up her glass, but she pulling it away every time.

"What happen to you, you playing shy?" Jupsingh say. "You say you like sherry and I buy sherry. Drink it."

And he pulling and pawing at Pat, but she drawing away from him all the time.

Jupsingh start to talk about how he have some money in Trinidad. Every now and then he knocking wood on the chair.

"We come up from Woking because Pat didn't want to go to a dance it had there. Man, I don't know where to take the girl."

"We still have time for a train," Pat say, looking at she watch.

"Relax, don't worry darling," Jupsingh say, and he moving across and trying to cuddle Pat, but she pushing him off.

"What you think, what you think boy?" Jupsingh keep asking now and then. It look as if he ain't hit a stroke in years and he rearing to go. And poor Pat sit down there so quietly and decent that Alfonso and Jarvis wondering what she doing with a test like Jupsingh.

Jupsingh as if he aware how sharp the thing is and he can't keep still, he moving about the room and talking and knocking wood and kissing this cross that he have pin to his chest.

"Well if is anything you could always let we sleep here, eh Jarvis?"

But Jarvis done size up the situation and don't want to have anything to do with it. It look as if Jupsingh mad, and he only wishing for them to get up and go.

"You could always get a hotel around here," Alfonso say.

"You think so boy, you think so?"

"We still have time to catch a train at Paddington," Pat say. "We have return tickets, remember?"

"Relax, don't worry darling," Jupsingh say, and trying to kiss Pat, but she turning away her face every time.

Is obvious that Jupsingh trying to coast time so that they can't catch the last train and have to sleep in town. Is also obvious that Pat ain't have no intention of sleeping with Jupsingh. But Jupsingh thirst so bad that he can't see that Pat is a decent girl and that she resenting the way he behaving.

Well the hours tick away, and when it coming near midnight they all get up to go and look for hotel.

Outside in the road, Pat ask Jupsingh, "What are you going to do?"

"I will get a room, don't worry," he say. You could see like he want to knock wood bad but it ain't have any in the road, only a plane tree on the other side. However, he kiss the cross.

"I am not staying in a room together with you," Pat say.

"What happen to this girl at all?" Jupsingh say.

A big argument start up in the road. Pat have she hands folded and she cool as a cucumber, but you could see that she make up her mind that whatever happen she ain't going to sleep with my boy. But my boy as if he in a kind of desperate panic, he putting his hand to his face and saying Jesus Christ and turning his back and taking a quick kiss of the cross. Alfonso trying to get in a word with the thing but Jupsingh watching them like a hawk while he talking to Jarvis.

"So what you think, so what you think?" The man like a recurring decimal.

"Well, let Pat go in the hotel and ask," Alfonso urge. "You know how it is, they wouldn't give you a room even if they have."

"The two of them should go together," Jarvis argue.

"How much hotel is around here?" My boy ask, pulling out his wallet and checking how much money he have.

"This is a posh area, only aristocats live here," Alfonso say, "but you might get a room for one fifteen."

"Come on then Pat, you coming?" Jupsingh holding the girl arm and pulling.

Eventually the two of them cross the road, but when they reach the entrance Pat stop and stand up by the side of the road and bend her knee, as if it hurting her. Jupsingh breeze in alone.

Alfonso and Jarvis on the other side watching she.

"The thing sharp," Alfonso say. "I wonder how Jupsingh manage to contact a nice thing like that?"

"But that man crazy," Jarvis say. "Why you bring them round by my house, man? He can't see the girl don't want to sleep with him?"

"Look how she stand up there alone," Alfonso say.

"It look bad," Jarvis say, "call she."

Alfonso call she with his hand and she cross back the road.

"What is he trying to do?" Pat ask.

"Well you see," Alfonso say, trying to pacify the situation, "he gone to get a room for you."

"And where is he going to sleep?"

"With you."

"Oh no. I'm not having anything like that. I said so already."

Jupsingh fly back out the hotel, rubbing his face.

"No rooms, man, no rooms," he say desperately. "Which part again we could try?"

"It have some other hotels in the next street," Alfonso say.

"Come on then," Jupsingh hold Pat and take off.

In the next street had a posh-looking hotel, and it had some people going in. Like they just come from theatre or something, with fur coat and bow tie and evening suit.

"It don't look like I would get a room there," Jupsingh say. "You want to try, Pat?"

But Pat shake her head and say no.

But the way Jupsingh thirst, he would of tried to get in the Savoy that night. He went in again, but is either they dish him up quickly or else he don't trust leaving Pat too long with the boys outside, but he come back in a hurry.

After that, they start combing all over Bayswater for a hotel, and every time Jupsingh trying to get Pat to go in with him, but Pat staying outside

with the boys. And Jupsingh only flying in and flying out, and sweating and smoking, and kissing the cross every chance he get. And Alfonso talking gently to Pat, because he feel sorry for her, and telling her not to worry.

When Pat and Jupsingh walking in front Alfonso tell Jarvis, "Man, the poor girl have to get a place to sleep, and I don't know why Jupsingh getting on so."

"You think he intend to leave she alone anywhere?" Jarvis say. "You can't see the man thirst bad?"

"So what you think, boy, what you think?" Jupsingh come close to Jarvis and asking him. "You think she will come? You think I stand a chance?"

"Yes man, yes," Jarvis say, "but don't rush the girl so much, man. You getting on like a maniac."

By the next hotel, after Jupsingh get a negative, he begin to get vex.

"Come and try with me," he tell Pat.

"No," Pat say, "there is still time for a late train."

"I bet I slap you up here tonight!" Jupsingh say. "I bet I start to get on ignorant!"

Poor Pat just stay quiet.

Alfonso say, "Man Jupsingh, you surprise me, man. You shouldn't tell the girl a thing like that. You letting me down. You from good family, man."

"I apologise," Jupsingh say, coming quiet like a lamb suddenly, and turning and kissing the cross. "I apologise, Alfonso. Sorry man."

And he start to cuddle up Pat in the road, but she barely tolerating him.

"Listen," Jarvis say, "I know some places up the road what does do bed and breakfast. You want to try there?"

"Let we go then," Jupsingh say, and start off quickly with Pat in front.

When they reach down by Westbourne Grove it had a taxi rank there, and Jarvis say, "Go and try the taxi drivers, they does always know of places and they could take you to one."

"I know three fellars from Barbados living by Tottenham Court Road," Jupsingh say, "we could go there and sleep. They have three bed."

"Where will I sleep?" Pat ask.

"With me, darling," Jupsingh say.

"No," Pat say. "I am not going."

"Jesus Christ," Jupsingh say, looking around desperately for wood to knock, "I will sleep alone on the floor, and you go have a bed for yourself. What happen, you don't trust me?"

Pat stay quiet.

Jupsingh went and try the taxi drivers, but he come back and say, "Man, them bastards won't take me, man."

"Well listen then," Alfonso say, "let we go up by Paddington. It have a lot of hotels there, you bound to get one. And we go be near the station. You tired walking, Pat?"

"It is all right," Pat say.

On the way they pass a wooden fencing and Jupsingh knock wood lightly as he pass.

They reach up near the station, and it had a neon light over one of them evil-looking hotels where Londoners does go late in the night to make a stroke.

Another set of big argument start up as they stand opposite the hotel. Pat won't go in with Jupsingh, and the four of them stand up there arguing and flinging their hands in the air and getting no place at all. Jarvis kicking himself for getting in this bacchanal when he could of been home sleeping, Alfonso trying his best to make peace because he sorry for the girl, Pat stand



up like a rock and wouldn't change she mind, and my boy talking away and making little circles now and then to kiss the cross.

"What you take me for?" He saying. "You think I is one of them damn worthless West Indians who would force you to do anything? So what you think? You think I will rape you? Oh God, man, all-you can't talk to this woman and make she see sense?"

But Pat seeing sense all right.

"Listen," Alfonso say, "why you don't go in and try and get a room for the girl alone if she don't want to stay with you? You can't leave her alone like that with no place to go."

"And then which part I will sleep? You think I have room to take? Or money to pay for two?"

"Look Jarvis," Alfonso say, "he could sleep by you?"

But Jarvis hemming and hawing, because he don't want this character in his room, though to avoid standing up in the road all night he saying all right in a kind of a way.

"So what you think, eh, what you think?" The old Jupsingh like a repeater, sweating and smoking.

Same time they stand up there a police car was making a rounds, coming up the road.

"Stop leaning on the wall like that, man!" Jupsingh tell Pat. "You don't see the police coming? You want them to think we is criminals or something?"

Pat lean off the wall.

Well after about fifteen minutes of no and yes and kiss-the-cross Jupsingh and Pat went in the hotel.

Alfonso and Jarvis stand up outside waiting.

"You think she will sleep with him?" Jarvis ask.

"No boy, I sure she won't. Anyway, it look like big thing here tonight. Listen, I run out of cigarettes. Go up there by the station and see if you find a slot machine. You have two shillings?"

Jarvis went for the cigarettes, and when he come back Pat was standing up with Alfonso.

"What happen?" he say.

"I am not staying there with him," Pat say.

A little while after hot-boy come out.

"I get the room," he say. "Is all right. The fellar waiting for we to make up we mind. What you say Pat?"

"No," Pat say.

"Oh Jesus Christ!" Jupsingh start off again. "You say you want to meet coloured people, and I take you around. You say you like the company of coloured people, and now you doing as if I is a criminal. I should of let you go to some of them damn Jamaicans and let them rough you up! What you think, eh? I sure if it was a white man you would of come!"

"It would not have made any difference," Pat say.

"You shouldn't tell the girl such things, man," Alfonso say. "You shouldn't treat the girl like that. If the girl don't want to go you can't force she."

"Girl," Jupsingh say, "you will sleep on the bed and I go sleep on the floor near to you. I won't touch you. I tired man, I want to sleep. I have to go to work in the morning, *oui*. What you think? You think I will rape you? You think I is that sort of fellar?"

And so Jupsingh getting on, raving and ranting, and turning round now and then to kiss the cross.

And Pat cool as a cucumber, though you could see she embarrass by the way my boy behaving.

And Alfonso like a mediator, trying his best to separate them, telling Jupsingh that he should leave the girl alone in the hotel and come back for her in the morning to catch train to Woking.

And Jarvis fed-up with everything, and walking away a little saying that he going home to sleep, but Alfonso calling him back every time and telling him to wait.

By this time people from the hotel come outside to watch the bacchanal, and Jupsingh pointing to them and telling Pat look the man waiting on us.

At last, after about half an hour of this, it look like hot-boy cool off and reconcile himself to the situation. As if his head tired bending down to kiss the cross, as if he tired looking about wildly for wood to knock, as if he run out of words. What he talking now ain't really making any sense at all.

"I could sleep by you boy Jarvis?"

"I suppose so," Jarvis say grudgingly. "If you have to."

"Boy, both of we is Indian together, boy! I know you wouldn't let me down!"

"All right, it settled?" Alfonso say. "Pat going to sleep in the hotel, you going to sleep by Jarvis, and in the morning you come and meet she and all-you catch the train to Woking. Right?"

"Jesus Christ!" Jupsingh say, rubbing his face.

At last, Pat decide to go in the hotel. Jupsingh went with she, telling the boys to wait for him.

"Man, I going home," Jarvis say.

"You can't do that man," Alfonso say. "You have to wait for the boy. I feel sorry for him, you know."

"You making joke!" Jarvis say. "Is all right for you, but is me he coming to sleep by. Suppose the man run basic in the night and start to make noise?"

While they stand up there a frowsy-looking thing come and ringing the hotel bell, but nobody ain't answering. She ask Alfonso if anybody there, and Alfonso say yes, that she should wait a minute.

The thing as if she just come off a beat in Bayswater-road. She looking tired and restless. She ask Alfonso if he have cigarettes and Alfonso tell she it have a slot machine up the road. She went away.

At last Jupsingh come back out. It look as if he quiet down a little, but as soon as they start to walk to Jarvis home he begin again.

"So what you think, boy? You think she like me? Listen, you think it safe to leave she there? I don't trust them fellars, you know. You think one of them in the hotel would break open the door and go in she room? So what you think boy?"

And he start to kiss this cross, and he run across the road and knock a plane tree and come back.

"Oh God," Jarvis tell Alfonso, "this man won't sleep, he go get on so all night!"

"Watch the road good," Alfonso tell Jupsingh as they walk, "you turn this corner here, and then you walk straight up. You think you could find it in the morning?"

"Oh Christ!" Jupsingh say suddenly, feeling his pocket. "I left my sun-shades home!"

Well Alfonso left them when they reach to Jarvis place, and Jarvis take Jupsingh upstairs, telling him not to make noise.

While they taking off their clothes Jupsingh whispering, "So what you

think, boy? You think I should go back? You think them fellars at the hotel would rape she? I think she is a virgin, you know."

"Is all right, man, is all right," Jarvis say. He tired and want to sleep.

"Boy, you is a good friend to let me sleep by you. We is Indian together, boy."

"Don't make so much noise, man. Go to sleep."

Jarvis went in the corner of the bed near the wall to put as much distance as he could between them. Jupsingh come under the blankets.

"So what you think, boy? You think she like me? She not a bad girl, you know. You think I should go back to the hotel? I don't trust these white girls, you know."

"Is all right, man, is all right. Go to sleep."

Jupsingh talking in a hoarse whisper, but every now and then as if his voice break and he talking naturally, and then as if he realise it sounding loud he gone back to the hoarse whisper.

Jarvis was just falling asleep when he hear a knocking. He thought it was nothing, but after a while he hear the knocking again. He thought perhaps the neighbour feel they making noise and knocking the wall, so he tell Jupsingh to keep quiet. But still the knocking went on, and when Jarvis look to see what it is, he see my boy lifting up the carpet under the bed to knock wood.

"Oh Jesus, keep quiet man!" Jarvis say.

"I can't sleep, boy, this clock making too much noise. Put it under the bed. You set it to alarm at six in the morning?"

"Is nearly six o'clock already," Jarvis say. "If you can't keep quiet you better sleep in the chair."

After five minutes of silence my boy start to cough. He start to cough some big cough that rattling and shaking the bed. Cough that coming from deep down, as if the man dead and fraid to lay down.

Jupsingh cough and cough, and he still knocking the floor, until at last he fall asleep. Then he begin to snore loud.

"Look what I put myself in for tonight!" Jarvis say to himself. "Never me again! Boy, you don't know it, but this is the last time you ever coming in this room or sleeping on my bed!"

Jupsingh wake up before the alarm went. He knock wood and shake Jarvis.

"The alarm didn't go, man!"

"Is not time yet," Jarvis say.

"Well I better get up. You have any coffee?"

"It have some in the saucepan."

"Thank you, man, thank you."

Jupsingh get up. Jarvis turn over and try to go back to sleep, but he hear a muttering. He look and he see Jupsingh kneeling down by the side of the bed.

"Hail Mary.....forgive us our sins.....blessed is Mary child of God....."

Jupsingh finish saying prayers and he kiss the sign of the cross and knock wood, and went and drink the coffee cold from the saucepan. He get dress quickly and shake Jarvis again.

"Thanks a lot, boy, God bless. You is a real friend, boy. Thanks a lot boy, eh. Cheerio, boy. Goodbye, boy."

He knock Jarvis table once more and he open the door and went out in the cold morning.

Now this is a true ballad—if I lie I die—and it ain't have no fancy ending like what a real short story have. But all the same, that wasn't the end of it.

Who Alfonso and Jarvis should see breezing in Bayswater that weekend but Jupsingh and Pat.

"I just went round by you, man!" Jupsingh tell Jarvis after greetings.

"I don't live there any more," Jarvis say. "I living in Camberwell now, I just come up here to see Alfonso."

"I looking for a good restaurant," Jupsingh say. "Pat say she hungry."

"It have a good Chinese one down there by Whiteleys," Alfonso tell him "Just by the corner."

"See you later, then."

Pat look back and give the boys a smile as they walk off.

"I didn't think she would go anyway with him again," Jarvis say.

"It look as if she really like him," Alfonso say.

About midnight that night Jarvis bell ring and he went downstairs, thinking that Alfonso was on a late lime and ring his bell. But when he open the door who he should see but my boy.

"I tell you I aint living here any more, man," Jarvis say, pushing the door to close it.

"Listen man, Alfonso outside, he say he want to see you. Jesus Christ, boy if you know what happen to me!"

Jarvis went outside and see Alfonso.

"My boy have a piece of wood in his coat lining," Alfonso tell Jarvis before Jupsingh could come up. "He have a piece of broom handle and he knocking it all the time!"

"Well what is this? Why you fellars ringing my bell so late?"

"Boy," Jupsingh begin, "if you know what happen! You really can't trust these Nordic women. Today I take Pat round by my cousin, you see. And all the time the man only sending me out to buy wine. Two or three times he send me, and when I went back the last time I see Pat laying down on the bed with him! But my cousin right, you know. He tell me that she no good."

Jupsingh haul up his coat and knock the broom handle.

"What the arse you doing with that broomstick?" Jarvis ask him.

"Some fellars want to make a fight with me," Jupsingh explain, "and I have this stick here to wash them with licks." He kiss the cross. This time he had it pin on his vest under a shirt so he had to open the shirt. He leave it open to save time when next he want to catch a kiss.

"So you left Pat?" Jarvis ask.

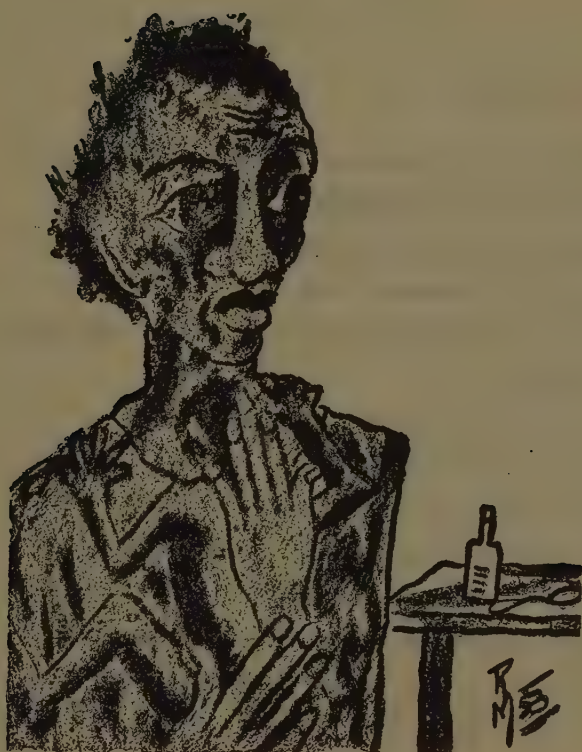
"Man, I take she to Marylebone and put she on the train," Jupsingh say. "I give she three-four slap and left she. These women ain't no good, man. Listen, you could put me up tonight, boy? I ain't have anywhere to sleep. You have anything to eat in your room?"

"You better go by your cousin. My girl here and you can't come to my room. In fact I going back right now."

And Jarvis make to go. Jupsingh hold his arm. "At least give me a two shillings to buy a train fare," he say. "I spend all my money on that girl and I ain't have a cent."

"You better ask Alfonso," Jarvis say, pulling his arm away. "I going. See you sometime."

When Jarvis turn to close the door he see Jupsingh knocking the piece of broom handle and arguing with Alfonso. The two of them start to walk up the road.





# DAVID DIOP

## THE RENEGATE

My brother, you flash your teeth in response to every hypocrisy,  
My brother with gold rimmed glasses,  
You give your master a blue eyed faithful look  
My poor brother in immaculate evening dress  
Screaming and whispering and pleading in the parlours of condescendence  
We pity you  
Your country's burning sun is nothing but a shadow  
On your serene, "civilized" brow,  
And the thought of your grandmother's hut  
Makes blush your face that is bleached  
By years of humiliation and bad conscience  
And while you trample on the bitter and red soil of Africa  
Let these words of anguish rhythmify your restless step —  
Oh, I am lonely, so lonely here.

## AFRICA

Africa, my Africa,  
Africa of proud warriors in ancestral Savannas,  
Africa of whom my grandmother sings,  
On the banks of the distant river  
I have never known you  
But your blood flows in my veins  
Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields  
The blood of your sweat  
The sweat of your work  
The work of your slavery  
The slavery of your children  
Africa, tell me Africa  
Is this you, this back that is bent  
This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation  
This back trembling with red scars  
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun?  
But a grave voice answers me:  
Impetuous son, this tree, young and strong  
This tree there,  
In splendid isolation amidst white and faded flowers  
That is Africa, your Africa,  
That grows again, patiently, obstinately  
And its fruit gradually acquire  
The bitter taste of liberty.

## THE VULTURES

In those days

When civilization kicked us in the face

When holy water slapped our tamed foreheads

The vultures built in the shadow of their talons

The bloodstained monument of tutelage

In those days

There was painful laughter on the metallic hell of the roads

And the monotonous rhythm of the paternoster

Drowned the howling on the plantations.

O the bitter memories of extorted kisses

Of promises broken at the point of a gun

Of foreigners who did not seem human,

Who knew all the books but did not know love.

But we whose hands fertilize the womb of the earth

In spite of your songs of pride

In spite of the desolate villages of torn Africa

Hope was preserved in us, as in a fortress,

And from the mines of Swaziland to the factories of Europe

Spring will be reborn under our bright steps.

## YOUR PRESENCE

In your presence I rediscovered my name  
My name that was hidden under the pain of separation  
I rediscovered the eyes, no longer veiled with fever  
And your laughter, like a flame piercing the shadows,  
Has revealed Africa to me, beyond the snows of yesterday.  
Ten years, my love  
With days of illusions and shattered ideas  
And sleep made restless with alcohol  
Ten years inhaling the suffering of the world  
The suffering that burdens today with the taste of tomorrow  
And that turns love into a boundless river  
In your presence I have rediscovered the memory of my blood  
And necklaces of laughter hung around our days  
Days sparkling with ever new joys.

# BOOK REVIEWS

THINGS FALL APART by Chinua Achebe.

Heinemann 1958; Price 15/-.

Not since "Mister Johnson" has a novel about West Africa written in English shown such love and warmth for its subject as this first novel by a young Nigerian author. The atmosphere and poetic feeling of the book can be compared to Camara Laye's "The Dark Child" (written originally in French) in which the same respect for tradition and sensitivity to personal relationships within the complex community are expressed. Camara Laye convinces us of the existence in his childhood of supernatural powers and incidents; Achebe, however, does not. He makes the will of the Oracle an essential pivot in his plot but does not make it plausible by relating it to the religious beliefs of the time. But the book as a whole creates for the reader such a vivid picture of Ibo village life that the plot and characters are little more than symbols representing a way of life lost irrevocably within living memory.

The quiet unpretentious prose, deceptively simple, lends credence to the activities of an agrarian community whose unquestioning acceptance of age-old moral values, customs, beliefs and fears make the society the entity it is. The society can only disintegrate when new ideas are infiltrated and the book is a reproach of the insidious gospel of the missionary. The missionary has the backing of the white man's law and resistance is useless. The story revolves round Okonkwo, who, imbued with the sense of righteousness handed down from generation to generation, personifies the stern father and husband of three wives and the respected and feared village elder. The fight for existence against soil and seasons, the feasts, festivals and rituals are all drawn in arresting detail. The day-to-day life of the family, the relationships between father and child, husband and wife and mother and child are unforgettably depicted and the solid stability of the community is conveyed. This is a piece of history; the reader feels the calamity on every page of the impending collapse of an ancient, self-reliant, purposeful and organised society in which the individual personality is not an end in itself but a contribution to the whole. The characters are oblivious of the significance of events but would indeed have been no less helpless if they had the perception or imagination to grasp the situation. This was not one village nor even one tribe, but an Africa that is already extinct in the minds of the present generation.

DIANA SPEED.

THE LEOPARD by V. S. Reid

Heinemann 1958; Price 13/6.

A West Indian who has never been to Africa writes a book about Mau Mau in Kenya. Nothing could seem less promising than that. Nor does the sensationalist blurb on the dust cover please us when it says that the author is "lighting up the superstition haunted mind" of the African.

Yet even after reading a few pages one becomes completely absorbed. This is not one of those cheap pseudo documentary novels that are full of generalizations about the "African mind."

The superb language of the author raises the story into the realm of the



poetic. One is no longer interested whether Nebu the hero (who is half Kikuyu half Masai) is really typical of the men we might meet on one of the large coffee plantations. Whether he is an "authentic" specimen or not, we feel involved in his fate almost from the start and are moved by his personal tragedy.

Nebu is convincing, not because the author tells us a great many details about East African customs, but because he has a deep understanding of East African philosophy.

Nebu is an extremely cruel human being, but he is not a savage. The author is able to make us understand this cruelty as being part of an entirely different set of human values in which Nebu believes. Nebu's concept of life is aesthetic rather than moral. Beauty is to him the purpose of life. The climax of his prayer to the GREAT ONE is: "give to me the dominion of the moon that all ugly things loose their ugliness when I look at them." Even in death the most important thing is not suffering but beauty: "Some Kikuyus who had done this splendid thing spoke of how beautiful the white men became when they saw the panga purse its mouth to kiss their throats."

Even torture is a purely aesthetic thing to Nebu:

"And he signalled by a snap of his fingers to the young men with the bull whips, who slowly tore the flesh from the policeman. They tore his clothes first, the buffalo hide whips cutting through cake. Marvellously, they undressed him, a baby in a tub, while he squirmed and wept and shrieked in the filth. And the moranis who had been magnificent cattle-boys before the emergency spilt not a drop of blood until he was divested, and even then the blood came in pin-pricks, in precious rubies."

Death in itself has not, of course, the terrible meaning to Nebu that it has to us. Death is not a dissolution of life, but an individual life is merging into another, wider reality like wind being absorbed by rain:

"Sometimes the wind flees ahead of the rain and then it slows for a mountain and is touched by the swordsmen. But does the wind die? The wind is not dead. It has gone into the rain. Oh, now the rain is cavalry of the royal household, pennants flying, silver hooves hitting, and the old bent earth slips backward, curved at the spine, cowering."

Nebu's aesthetic interpretation of death, killing and torture does not mean that he kills arbitrarily. His life is dominated by an awareness of a supreme law, and he knows that he must pay for every life he takes. We can accept him in his strangeness and his cruelty because he is so complete, so pure. He lives out his life remaining completely faithful to his ideal of beauty in every action. He knows no compromise. He can rightly despise the white man who has no understanding of life; who never lives by his own concepts. "The doctrine of brotherly love which the white man preached from his god was like the wings of the ostrich. No ostrich had ever flown by his wings." The white man's values are all mixed up: he dies without grace. He does not realize that the agony of death could be a fulfilment; he merely clings to his bit of life. He is coarse and insensitive.

The real opponent of Nebu is not the white man but his own son by a white woman. The boy is a cripple who hates Nebu and all black men. Towards Nebu he plays the white bwana, yet he despises the Whites also. He is a confused child, forever uncertain of his own feelings. The boy is an ugly human being, impotent and frustrated and yet in a position to torment and almost destroy Nebu. He symbolizes perhaps the new hybrid culture that grows up in the cities: immature and insignificant it has yet more chances of survival than the pure, meaningful world of tradition that is represented by Nebu.

This is the authors second novel. The first "New Day" was published in 1950. In the great beauty of its language "The Leopard" is perhaps the finest thing that has come out of the West Indies yet.

U.B.

MOON ON A RAINBOW SHAWL by Errol John

(Faber & Faber) 5/-

*Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* was awarded the first prize in the Observer 1957 Play Competition judged by Kenneth Tynan, Alec Guinness, Peter Ustinov, Peter Halo and Michael Barry. It has also made history in being the first play by a West Indian to be published and produced in London. The author is a Trinidadian who has been living and working in England for some years now, and who has taken part in radio and television drama programmes. This experience has obviously stood him in good stead as can be seen from the neat construction of his play and the lively use of dialogue in the Trinidad idiom which is becoming familiar to readers of West Indian novels.

The play is set in the slummish backyard of a city street in Trinidad. The tenants occupy two dingy houses facing each other across a small stone court with enclosed shower for communal use. Ephraim, a trolley-bus driver, and Mavis, a prostitute, occupy separate rooms in the smaller house; and the other with a veranda, is occupied by the Adams family and Rosa, who is Ephraim's mistress and Old Mack's café cashier, in a separate room. The action shifts about these four points, occupied by the chief tenants, and the stone court.

The dominant theme is ambition pursued and hope unrealised in the humdrum lives of these coloured working folk. Yet it is astonishing how much drama Mr. John packs into these same lives with so tenuous a plot as holds the play together. Ephraim's ambition is to escape from the circumscribed region of his trolley-bus career to the larger fields of the U.K. Esther, the twelve-year old daughter of Charlie and Sophia Adams, is on the threshold of a brilliant future having won a scholarship to secondary school. She is contrasted with her mother, a virago with a caustic, ribald wit which hides a kind heart. As a symbol of youthful innocence and bright hopes she also contrasts with the sensual Mavis, and with Rosa who has given herself to the indifferent Ephraim but is pursued by the infatuated skinflint of a landlord, Old Mack, who is also the proprietor of the café where she works. Ephraim, discontented with his present lot, is contrasted, on the one hand, with Prince, Mavis's lover, who is a boisterous womaniser living only for the delights of the moment; and, on the other, with Charlie Adams who leads an aimless, indolent existence feeding on his frustrated hopes of being a test cricketer. Charlie weeps with joy at his daughter's success and his intention to show his joy in a tangible way hastens the catastrophe of the play which shows the true human quality of his nagging wife, Sophia, who comforts him; and who also seeks to reconcile Ephraim and Rosa to each other.

Sophia expresses the general attitude to life of the backyard community when she says —

We do only live once, child. So we have to have we little joke.  
What yer say?

She is determined to make the most of life in spite of a feckless husband, the burden of having to support her family with the earnings of a washer-woman, and the constant irritation of having to rub shoulders with the disreputable Mavis, a dangerous example to Esther, in the crowded backyard from which she longs to escape.

The life of the backyard by night and day is evoked with all its local

colour and confusion—laughter and tears, bickerings and gossip, the rough and tumble of a brief scuffle, children laughing, crying, shouting, the ever-present steelband and calypso music, the cries of street vendors, and the sound of cars and trolley-buses. All these form as it were the undertone of the brisk and natural dialogue, except for the first scene where it is slow and misfires in its lyrical intention. Errol John has a faultless ear for the dialogue of the backyard with its easy flow, its banter and ribald humour, its incongruous mixture of the sacred and profane, its sprinkling of "wise saws and modern instances"—all accentuated with telling gestures and expressive "business".

There is a fine piece of dramatic irony in Sophia's gloating over the robbery in Old Mack's café:

SOPHIA. It serve him blasted right. That is judgment from heaven for the way he robbing we here—with the rent on these nasty little rooms. Pity they didn't carry way the whole café—by now so he paralytic with a stroke.

ROSA. Mrs. Adams, yer too uncharitable.

SOPHIA. Thief from thief, child, does make Jehovah laugh! An' who is me—a mere mortal—not to laugh when somebody do in that old scoundrel. Glad? I too damn glad!

ROSA. I don't want to laugh nah, Mrs. Adams. Because all this is police and court-house business. And that is a thing I don't want to be in at all.

SOPHIA. I wouldn't let that worry me, child.

I too glad somebody outdo that damn old miser at last! Lay up not for yourself treasures on earth—where rust and moth does corrupt—and where corbeaux always waitin' to pounce! I glad—I too damn glad! I wish was me did pick out he eye!

Her wish is virtually granted before she makes it!

I. C. Worsley, a leading dramatic critic, in pronouncing a careful judgment on the play, writes in the *New Statesman*, 13 December 1958:

...*Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* has...nothing in it but the banal fact of poverty and colour.

Poverty is certainly a fact with which the characters have to reckon, and which the audience is called upon to take note of; but the same is not true of colour except for an incident related by Charlie Adams which could as well have been substituted by another with the same result on his career. The judges saw the play as a play about people but Mr. Worsley suggests that they were unconsciously influenced in their choice, among other things, by contemporary sentimentality about colour. *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* has been justly described by other English critics as a compassionate play. Though presenting the intimate life of only a certain stratum of West Indian life it shows such a clear understanding of and sympathy for the characters involved that it quickens the humanity of anyone who can truly enter into the experience of the play acted or read; and the final impression is that it is a play about people in which the characters happen to be coloured.

J. A. RAMSARAN.

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN by James Baldwin (Ace Books, 2s. 6d.)

GIOVANNI'S ROOM by James Baldwin (Michael Joseph 15/-)

James Baldwin is one of the most gifted negro writers the United States have yet produced. His novels do not deal with society, though one is always conscious of the form of society which has shaped his characters, but with the relation of an individual with the other individuals who mean most to him at that time of his life. The relationships feel authentic and almost frighteningly first hand. In "Go Tell it on the Mountain" an adolescent meets his God, as agonizingly conscious of his sins and the hatred of his father which divided

him from authority as ever Jacob was of the son he was told to sacrifice. Mr. Baldwin has taken religion from the "do gooders" the pomp and ritualists, the vaguely mystical back to the Old Testament. He has shown it to be a direct experience of God, no peaceful way of spending a Sunday, and which can be stimulated but not faked, and has nothing to do with being good or bad. He has shown that such an experience makes a man believe in God, it does not make him a saint but it gives him a feeling of power, which he might abuse by being tyrannical and self righteous like Gabriel Grimes, or which might help him to overcome his fear of death, as it did Florence, or to bear a hard life and live with mistakes which had led to both birth and death without being destroyed, as it did Elizabeth, and which might set a man free to be himself as it did the hero John Grimes.

In his second novel, "Giovanni's Room", Mr. Baldwin deals with a very different experience, homosexuality, but the relationships between the hero and his father, aunt, fiancée and lover, Giovanni, are just as authentic and first hand. As in his first novel the directness of the experiences come chiefly from the author's true ear for conversation and his skill at getting it across, while the psychological climate of the novel is due to the author's intellectual grasp of social and psychological factors which his artistic skill has translated into significant details, hints and above all, "Giovanni's Room". David's first meeting with Giovanni, in Gilliam's bar, is as idyllic as any love scene in Shakespeare. Indeed, as in Shakespeare, we feel that it is irrelevant whether the heroine wears trousers or a skirt, so charming a flirt must obviously be pursued. But David is looking for escape and fulfilment, and Giovanni for oblivion and a safe imprisonment, so the room becomes the symbol of their struggle. One squalid room was sufficient for Giovanni, David had been conditioned to need a well run apartment with plumbing. The union is not fruitful; at first there is joy in it, but they cannot comfort each other. They reinforce each other's weaknesses, and also overstimulate the masculine pride which should have been their strength. David's pride leads him to that time honoured masculine proceeding desertion, and Giovanni's to the equally time honoured proceeding of violence, murderous violence which in turn leads to the guillotine. The way in which Mr. Baldwin shows us that whereas the weakness which led to their withdrawal from the world into each other's arms was damaged love, a universal emotion; their reaction was conditioned by their environment and upbringing can hardly be overpraised. The Italian's salvation lies the other side of repentance and death, the middle class American's through neurotic agony.

DENNIS DUERDEN.

"CITY OF SPADES" by Colin MacInnes.

Mac Gibbon & Kee, London.

This is the sort of book which has to be read at one sitting. The shifting viewpoints of the narrative give it a swift cinematic quality, and this device enrolls London as a member of the cast.

Johnny Fortune, an eighteen year old Nigerian from Lagos, is the focal point of the book. He conventionally sows his wild oats, and is respectably horrified that any woman who has disqualified herself from respectability should expect him to compromise his family by legitimising the harvest. In the end he comes up against the London Constabulary. They are depicted imbued with Victorian copy book morality, "Evil communications corrupt good manners" and "He who touched pitch shall be defiled", and so they frame Johnny Fortune who is indulging in riotous living with dubious companions. With a complete lack of imagination they frame him on the one charge which hurts his pride; and two liberal intellectuals get him out of the mess by telling lies.

This could be the theme of tragedy in the grand manner, but it isn't, its



a witty modern commentary. The squabbles between West Africans and West Indians are great fun, heavily spiced with brilliant dialect. The take-over of the Welfare Office, the up and coming woman executive, and all sorts and conditions of outings and parties are realistically satirized.

But what gives the novel its great interest is that it tackles the problem of race relationships, and tackles it very thoroughly. It must be admitted that Mr. Macinnes has done West Africans and West Indians no good by confining himself to the rackets fringe which supporters of the colour bar naturally like to focus attention on, but it must also be admitted that he was writing a novel, not a tract for the times, however much we need one. The first chapter brilliantly summarizes two broad attitudes, the reluctantly converted blimp and the conscientious liberal, echoed in the second chapter by two people who have not thought about it. Johnny says to the ticket collector, "We like living out our lives" and the ticket official replies "And we like peace and quiet. Run along son". Montgomery Pew (Mr. Macinnes has had great fun with names by the way); Johnny's chief 'Jumble' friend didn't like peace and quiet and relished his 'Spade friends' exuberance, while remaining conscious of their different tribal customs and background. Muriel, his girl, hadn't sufficient education to understand that he had a different attitude to life and so for a time hated him for making her suffer. As so often happens Johnny's characters, the lawyer Mr. Wesley Vial, and the "something mysterious in the B.B.C." Miss Theodora Pace are entirely unaffected by colour. Mr. Vial judges men by their attractiveness, and compels the jury to class Johnny by his status in Lagos, and not think of him as 'coloured' as the police have. Miss Theodora, like the legendary Professor Higgins, is an intellectual who treats everybody alike. Against her will she falls in love with Johnny, and grieves when she loses the child which to her would be Johnny's child, never a half-cast. She hasn't the Anglo-Saxon verbal sensitiveness on behalf of the underdog, and discusses the colour bar with West Africans and West Indians. One of them describes its manifestation in Britain as "universal politeness, universal coldness", and they make the point that they don't want people to be kind to them, they can look after themselves, they want people to be at ease with them.

DENNIS DUERDEN.

"COUPS DE PILON" by David Diop.

Presence Africaine.

These are passionate poems of a young Senegalese. Their subject matter is the suffering of "Africa", the struggle against the white man and the hope for a glorious day of freedom. Their dominant note is bitterness. David Diop creates romantic images of traditional African life:

"O Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral savannahs".

He believes in the mystic ties of blood that unite him with this past. He speaks of the "memory of blood" and of "my looks full of your blood".

The white man's world has savagely invaded and destroyed the proud romantic world of the African:

"In the days  
when civilization hits us in the face  
when holy water hits our domesticated forehead."

The white man's civilization is bluntly declared inhuman and hypocritical:

"In the country where the houses touch the sky  
but where the heart is not touched  
In the country where the hand is placed on the Bible  
but where the Bible remains closed."

The poet's bitterness and hate are turned even more violently against the renegade African:

"My poor brother in immaculate evening dress



screaming, whispering and pleading in the parlours of condescendence.  
He attacks those who are ashamed of their African past;

"His face bleached by years of humiliation  
blushes at the sight of his grandmother's hut."

Yet, in spite of the violation of his country, and although many of his people have become traitors to their race, the poet believes in the future:

"Impetuous son,  
that tree there,  
splendidly alone amidst white and faded flowers  
that is Africa, your Africa.  
Patiently, obstinately it grows again  
And slowly its fruit acquire  
the bitter taste of liberty."

David Diop is not a mature poet. His images are not always successful and often he writes declarations of faith rather than poems. Yet this volume is moving through the urgency and strength of feeling that produced it.

U.B.

"LA RONDE DES JOURS" by Bernard B. Dadié.

Ed. Pierre Seghers.

Compared with the aggressiveness of "Coup de Pilon" this volume of poems by Bernard Dadié seems gentle and dreamy. There is no bitterness in Dadié's poems only resignation. Like David Diop (and in fact most West African poets) he often speaks about the problems of his race and country. But he has not the militant attitude of the author of "Coup de Pilon".

"I thank you God for creating me black,  
for having made me  
the sum of all pains,  
for having placed on my head  
the world."

Here is philosophic acceptance rather than revolutionary protest. Even his plea for equality sounds more like a lament:

"The blackness of my skin  
is not a sign of misfortune.  
The sky is clad  
in white,  
in cream,  
in mauve.  
The blackness of my skin  
is not a sign of misfortune.  
The sky is dyed in black.  
the colour of skin."

Dadié's poetry can have a gentle beauty, but all too often his feelings are too vague to produce precise and striking images.

"I love life  
I love joie!  
And love!"

Often his poems are prompted by such loose ideas rather than by specific experiences. As a result his images are frequently very unconvincing. In his "Ode to Africa" he uses the following: "Sabbath days", "David's harp", "marble sanctuaries", "amphora of virgin porphyry", "ambrosia of the gods". The poet certainly did not "see" Africa when he wrote this. It is difficult to believe an African poet when he speaks of "murmuring brooks" and "the roses of love". Such conventional expressions betray a complete lack of vision.

While David Diop's poetry tends to be too topical, too much of a political manifesto perhaps, the danger for Dadié is that he loses himself in a vague mist of aestheticism.

U.B.

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Dr. Bähr, of the University of Tübingen, Germany, is preparing a book that is to commemorate the victims of the second World War, specially those fallen in battle or killed by the Dictatorial Governments. Writings of Africans killed during the second World War are to be included. (Articles, Stories, Poems and Letters) Readers of "Black Orpheus" who know of suitable material are asked to forward it to Dr. Bähr, Universität Tübingen, Germany.

## AN ITALIAN ANTHOLOGY OF AFRICAN VERSE

Miss Christina Brambilla (Piazza Grandi, 3, Milano, Italy) is preparing a series of Anthologies of African Poetry. The first volume containing the works of French Speaking Authors has already appeared. Miss Brambilla is now compiling material for a volume of English Speaking Writers. Would interested authors submit their work to Christina Brambilla at above address.

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

### DAVID DIOP

was born in Bordeaux. His father is from Senegal, his mother from the French Cameroons. He spent his youth partly in France and partly in West Africa. His first volume of poems "Coups de Pilon" was published by Presence Africaine. (See also review on page 57). The four poems printed here were translated from "Coups de Pilon."

### DENNIS DUERDEN

Formerly an art teacher in Keffi Secondary School, Nigeria. Now lives in London where he is well known as an art critic. Works for BBC in Hausa Programmes section.

### LANGSTON HUGHES

born 1902 in Joplin, Missouri, USA. Studied in Cleveland and Columbia University, New York. Travelled round the world doing occasional jobs. Lives from his writing since 1929. His most important works are: "The Weary Blues", 1926; "Fine Clothes to the Jew", 1927; "Dear Lovely Death" 1931; "The Dream Keeper", 1932; "Mulatto", 1936; "Shakespeare in Harlem", 1942; "Fields of Wonder", 1947; "One Way Ticket", 1949; all published by Alfred A. Knopf Inc. New York. "Montage of a Dream Deferred", Henry Holt & Co. New York 1951.

### CAMARA LAYE

born in French Guinea in 1924. Went to France to study Engineering. Is now living in Accra where he is attached to the Guinea minister in Ghana. His first book "L'Enfant Noir" published by Plon in 1954. (English: "The Dark Child", Collins 1955) "Le Regard Du Roi" Plon 1955. ("The Radiance of the King" Collins 1956). This story is published by courtesy of "Presence Africaine", who published the original French version.

### ANDREW SALKEY

gives following description of himself: "Born in Panama 1928; educated in Jamaica and England; has written a legion of highly rejectable six minute commentary scripts, stories, radio plays and features for the BBC domestic and overseas services; attempts to teach English in a London comprehensive school; and at present is passionately threatening to write his first novel."

### SAMUEL SELVON

born Trinidad, 1923. Worked as wireless operator in the navy during the war. Then subeditor of "Trinidad Guardian". Came to Britain in 1950. Published four novels and a book of short stories. "A Brighter Sun" 1952. "An Island Is a World" 1954. "The Lonely Londoners" 1955 "Ways of Sunlight" (Short Stories) 1958. "Turn Again Tiger" 1958. He is now working on a musical play.

### WOLE SOYINKA

born in Abeokuta. Studied at University College Ibadan. Later took Honours Degree in Leeds University. Has been teaching English in London and is about to take up an appointment as Information Officer in Ibadan, Nigeria. Two of his plays "The Lion and the Jewel" and "The Swamp Dwellers" were performed at University College, Ibadan in February 1959.

### THE ARTISTS

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